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LONDON AT SCHOOL

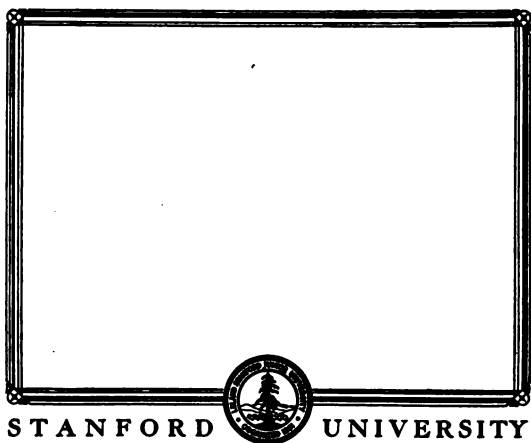


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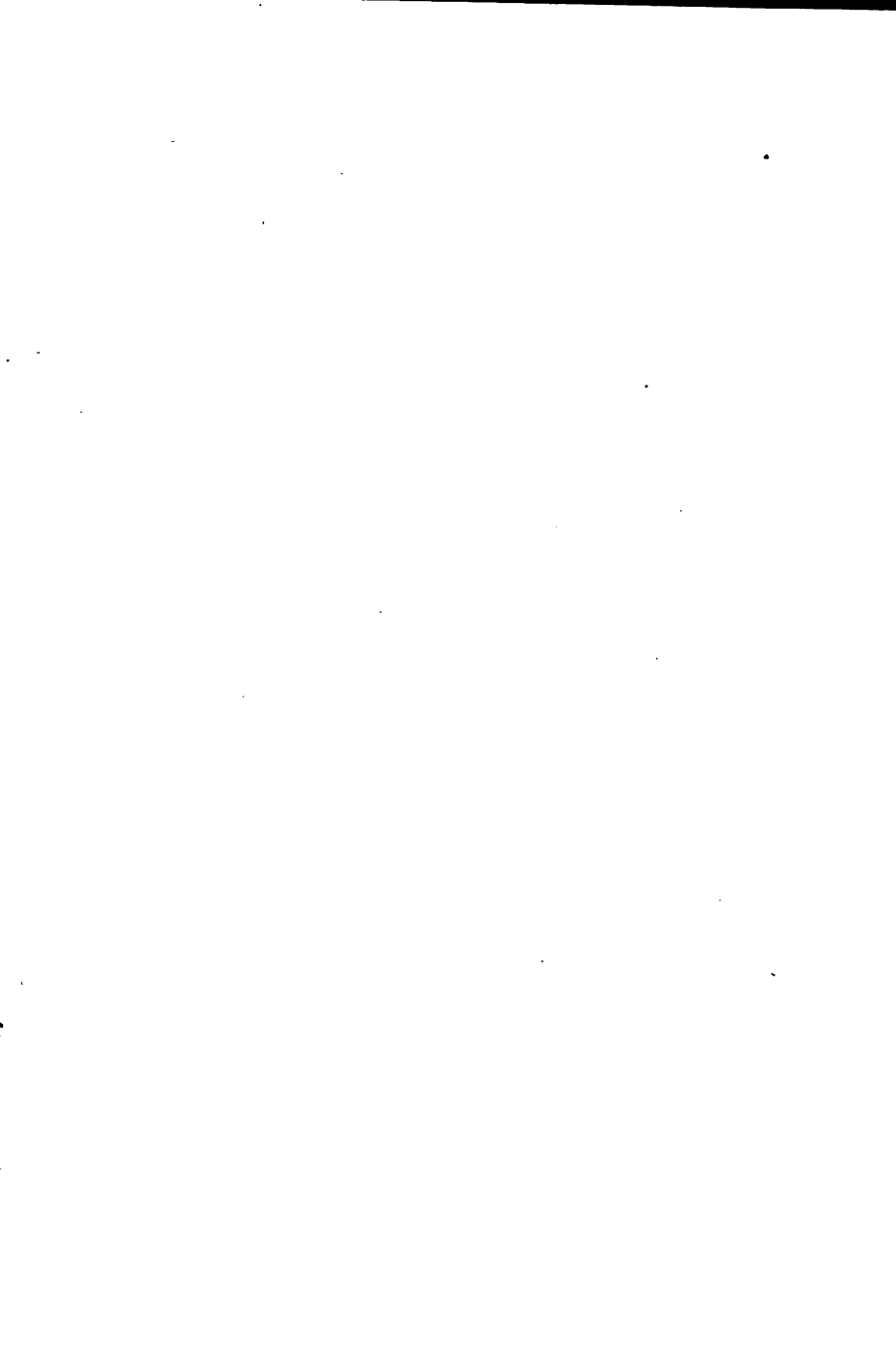
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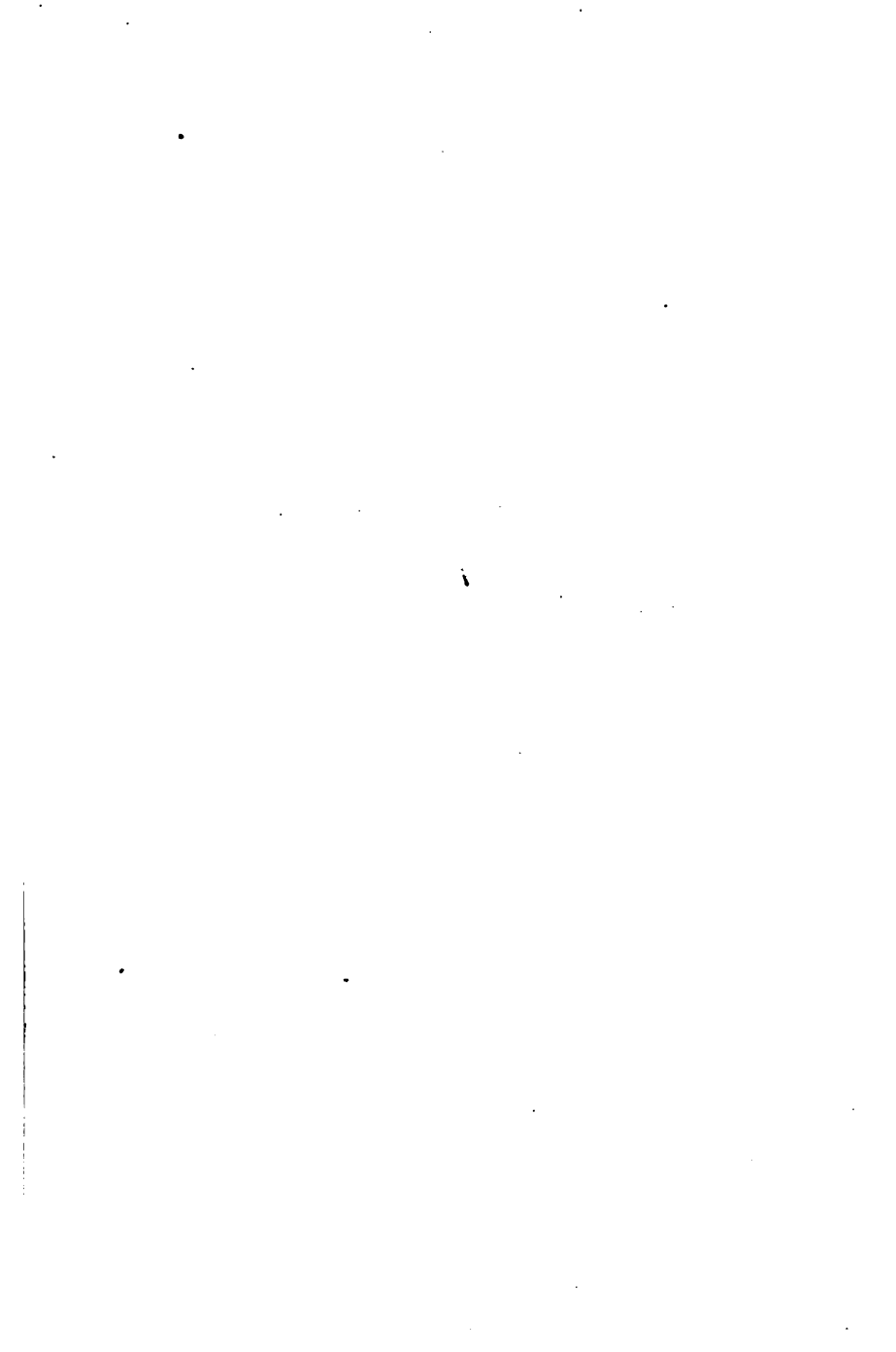


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**Elements of Moral and Religious Teaching in the
Day School, the Home and the Sunday School**

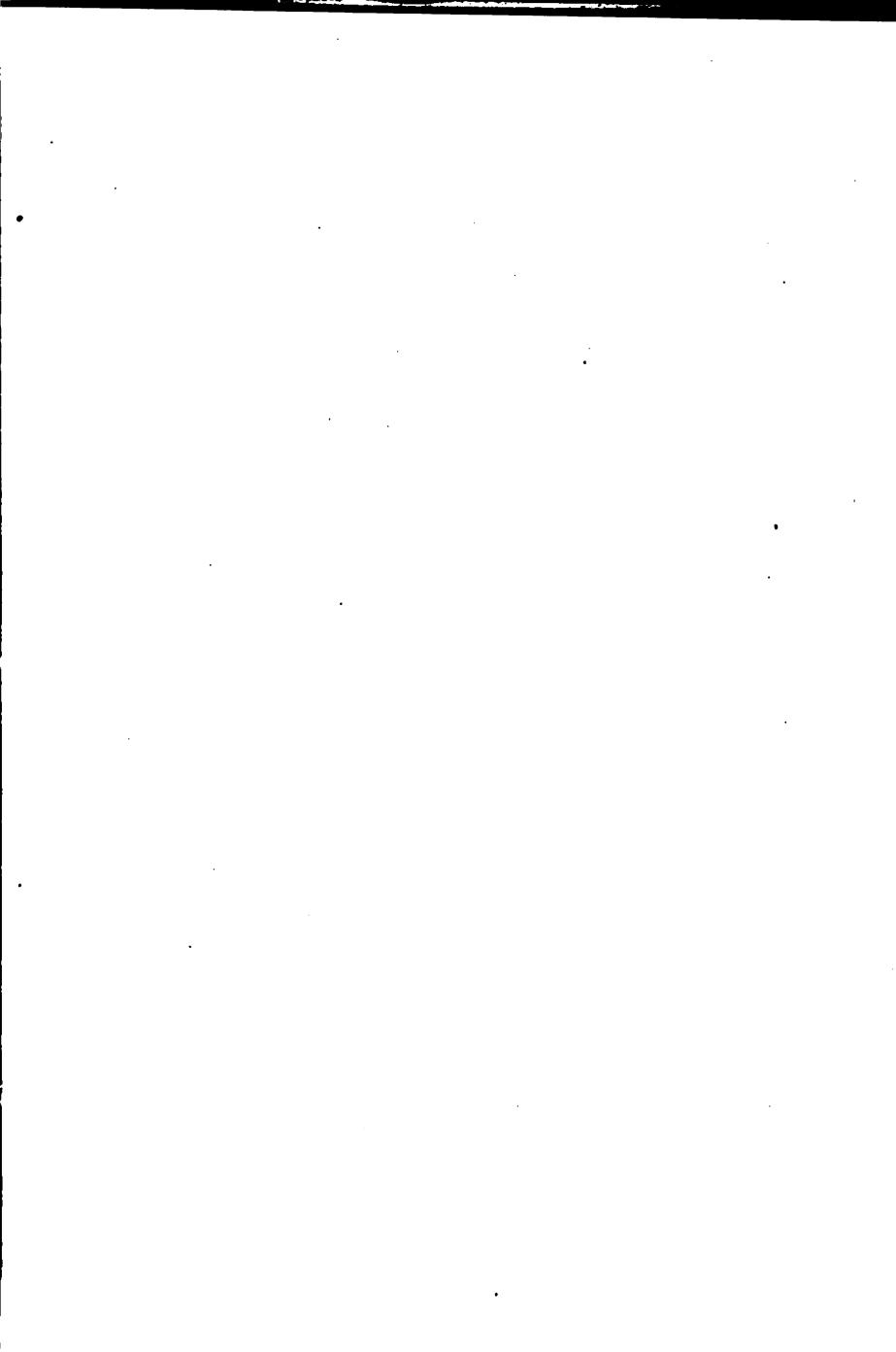
BY

H. THISELTON MARK

Master of Method, Owen's College, Manchester

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*[Lombardi & Co.]*

**LORD LAWRENCE,**  
FIRST CHAIRMAN OF THE LONDON SCHOOL BOARD.

# LONDON AT SCHOOL

*THE STORY OF THE SCHOOL BOARD,  
1870-1904*

BY  
HUGH B. PHILPOTT

*ILLUSTRATED*



LONDON  
T. FISHER UNWIN  
PATERNOSTER SQUARE

1904

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C

TO

Mrs LEGG,

HEAD MISTRESS OF MONTEM STREET

INFANT SCHOOL,

MY FIRST TEACHER AND ONE OF THE BEST.

379.153  
P643

## P R E F A C E

THE intelligent appreciation of educational questions has been greatly hindered in England by the prevalence of two fallacies: the one that "the religious question," as it is called, is the only matter relating to elementary schools with which the general public need concern itself. The other—a corollary from this—that all other questions relating to the education of children are highly technical matters in which only specialists can take any degree of interest.

In trying to tell the story of the London School Board, I have sought to show that the question of the religious instruction of the children is but one of many great questions in which every good citizen, every lover of children, certainly every parent, should be deeply interested; and further, that the problems connected with the upbringing of the children of a great population are full of deep human interest. They are not teachers' problems only, but everybody's problems; for since 1870 the ultimate responsibility for the education of a very large proportion of the children of London has rested upon the community at large, and in view of the great addition now made to that responsibility, it is desirable that all should realise what it involves.

While the first object of this book is to give some account of the history and work of the London School Board, it is hoped that it will be found to contain matter of even wider application. One result of the new Education Acts has been a large accession to the number of those who are deeply

interested in the details of educational administration. It may be, therefore, that a sketch of the development of elementary education in London and an estimate of the position that has now been reached may prove acceptable to many who are not immediately concerned with London education. For the problems which the London School Board has had to face, and those which still await solution at the hands of the new educational authority, are not substantially different from the problems connected with elementary school work in all parts of the country.

I think it will be apparent that this book is not in any sense official. It is written entirely from the point of view of the public interest which rightly attaches to a great and fruitful piece of public service. I have endeavoured, so far as an outsider may, to ascertain and record without prejudice the facts relating to the most interesting and important departments of Board School life. I have sought information from many different quarters, and my thanks are due to a greater company than I could possibly enumerate—including past and present members of the Board, School Board officials of all ranks, teachers and children—for valued help in the way of information, of impressions and opinions, and of facilities for obtaining my own impressions from observation of the work in progress. I have, of course, made considerable use of the official publications of the Board, and would especially acknowledge my indebtedness to Mr T. A. Spalding's *The Work of the London School Board*, published in 1900 in connection with the Paris Exhibition. Perhaps, also, the recollection of days when I myself was a scholar in a London Board School has to some extent coloured portions of the narrative.

Several of the chapters have been published—generally in a much abbreviated form—in various magazines. Thus the chapters on Infant Schools,

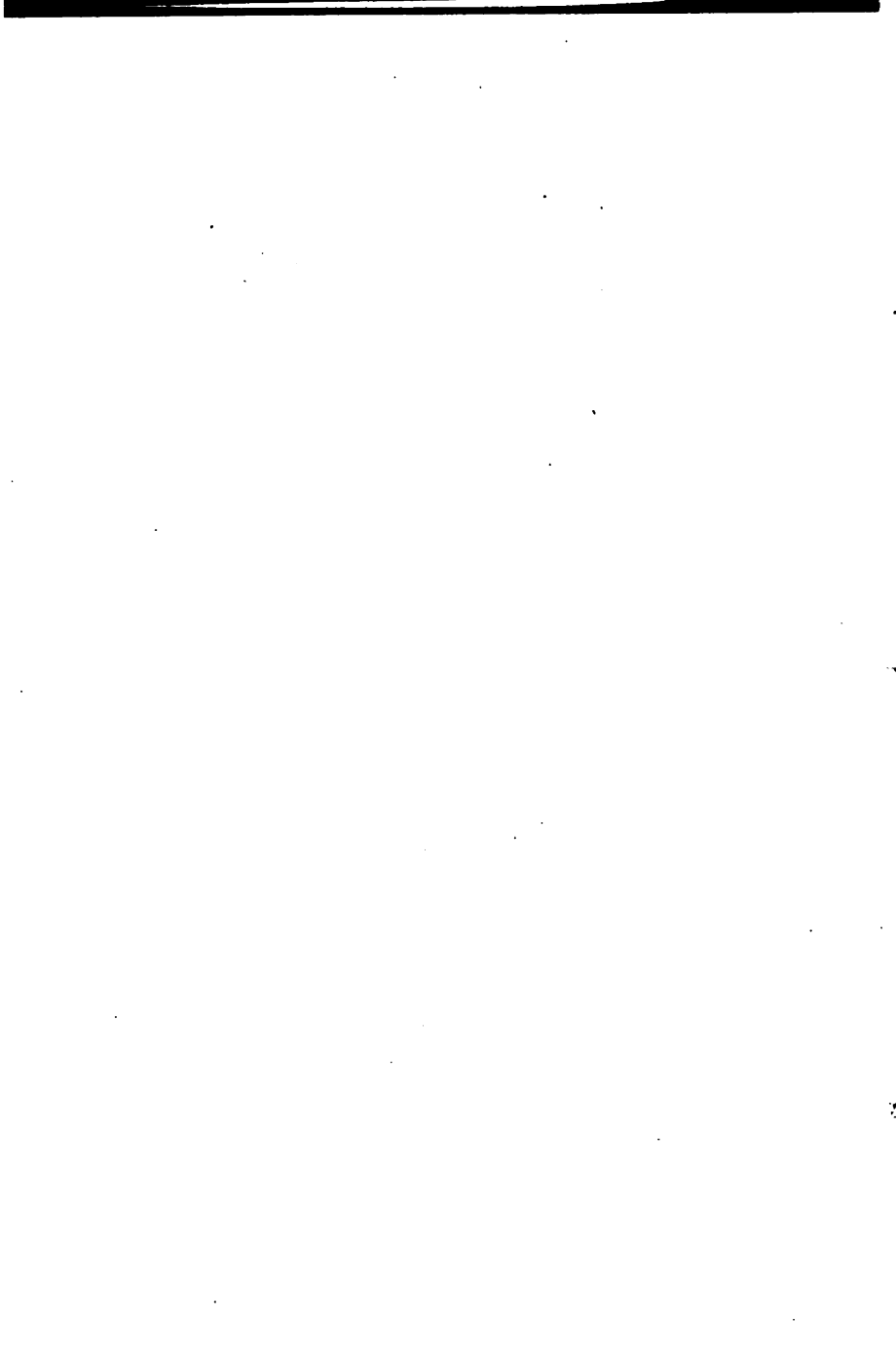
the *Shaftesbury* Training Ship, the Gordon House Girls' Home, Schools for the Blind, Schools for the Deaf, and Schools for Defective Children appeared in the *Leisure Hour*, and those on the Educational Ladder and the Board School as a Social Force in the *English Illustrated Magazine*. The substance of the chapter on Physical Training appeared in *Sandow's Magazine* and the *Boys' Own Paper*, and in the chapter on Schools for the Deaf I have incorporated, by kind permission of Messrs Cassell & Co., a few paragraphs from an article which appeared in the *Quiver*.

The majority of the illustrations are from photographs by Mr Henry Irving of Horley.

H. B. P.

*April 1904.*





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# LONDON AT SCHOOL

## CHAPTER I

BEFORE 1870

WHEN Mr W. E. Forster rose in the House of Commons on February 17, 1870, to explain the provisions of a Bill to provide for Public Elementary Education in England and Wales, he was opening a new chapter in English history. For the first time the Government of the day asked Parliament to assert the right of every English child to receive an efficient elementary education, and the duty of the State to provide it. Nothing has been quite the same in England since the Act of 1870—the great charter of English childhood—became the law of the land. Our concern is with the new conditions of life which the Act made possible, but a right understanding of these involves some appreciation of the old order that was being superseded.

There is nothing very wonderful in the fact that the Government of 1870 sought to establish a national system of education. The wonder is that such a step was not taken long before. The Bill was at least half a century overdue, and as we look back from the standpoint of to-day, the state of educational darkness which prevailed in England during the first half of the reign of Queen Victoria seems almost incredible.

And the reason for this was not that either Parlia-

ment or the country was entirely apathetic on the subject. At very frequent intervals during the preceding fifty or sixty years popular education had been a subject of discussion in Parliament; committees and Royal Commissions had investigated, resolutions had been proposed, and Bill after Bill had been introduced aiming at the extension, by one means or another, of the existing facilities for elementary education. But nearly all these efforts proved abortive, not because the opponents of popular education were too strong, but because our elementary schools have been for generations one of the favourite battle-grounds of contending creeds; and the irony of the thing is that children have been left to grow up in virtual heathenism because rival sectarians could not agree as to the type of Christian they would have them be.

No one church or party has a monopoly of discredit for this state of affairs. At one time the bishops and clergy would block the way, because some proposal did not sufficiently safeguard their ecclesiastical supremacy; at another time the Dissenters would be the obstructionists in their anxiety, as John Bright once put it, "not to aggrandise a Church by whose act their forefathers had languished in prison." Not once, but many times, when some forward step seemed about to be taken, the extremists of one camp or both intervened to frustrate the efforts of the educationists. It was all very lamentable, but perhaps the saddest thing of all is that we do not seem to have learned wisdom from the experience of those barren struggles, but are again in the thick of the old dismal conflict.

Of course some small degree of progress was made. The principle of Government assistance to elementary education was recognised for the first time in 1834, when the House of Commons voted £20,000 to be expended in new school buildings. In 1839 a Committee of the Privy Council was formed for the purpose of taking over from the Treasury the adminis-

tration of this annual grant and of promoting education generally. This was the beginning of our Education Department. The sum voted by Parliament increased year by year, till in 1870 the grant for primary schools alone, excluding the cost of central office, inspectors and normal schools, amounted to £415,000. A systematic inspection of schools was organised, and the grants were made dependent on the reports of the inspectors. Thus although Parliament failed to agree on any plan for promoting national education, something was being done on bureaucratic lines. The Committee of Council on Education assumed semi-legislative functions, and actually carried out some of the reforms which had been rejected by Parliament. And although the acts of the Department were often open to criticism both on constitutional and educational grounds, we may be thankful that such a body existed to introduce some little order into the chaos and shed some little light on the prevailing darkness.

How deep that darkness was we have abundant evidence to show. In 1861 was published the voluminous Report of the Royal Commission presided over by the Duke of Newcastle, which was appointed three years previously "to inquire into the present state of popular education in England, and to consider and report what measures, if any, are required for the extension of sound and cheap elementary instruction to all classes of the people." In 1869, in consequence of a motion in the House of Commons, a more restricted though not less thorough inquiry was made into the educational condition of four great towns—Liverpool, Manchester, Leeds and Birmingham. Without burdening these pages with detailed statistics, it may be useful to give a few typical facts and figures culled from these and other sources.

The Newcastle Commission estimated that of the children between the ages of three and fifteen rather less than one-half were on the books of any school. Of

the children of the poorer classes actually receiving instruction, rather less than one quarter were in schools under inspection—the only schools in which a reasonable degree of efficiency might be looked for. Some years later—in 1870—it was estimated that the accommodation in the public elementary schools of England was sufficient for just about half the children who were of an age and class to require elementary instruction. An inquiry carried out in the same year by the Society for the Encouragement of Arts, Manufactures and Commerce into the educational condition of a district of East London covering about one square mile, and including Bethnal Green, Shoreditch and Hoxton, showed that only about one-third of the children between three and twelve years of age were in schools of any kind. The inquiry respecting Liverpool Manchester, Leeds and Birmingham showed that about a quarter of the children in those four towns attended no school at all, and another quarter were in schools where the education given was little better than a farce. Of the actual state of things in London when the first School Board got to work more will be said in subsequent chapters.

In order, however, to understand the educational condition of England immediately before the School Board era began, it is necessary not only to see how many children went to school but what kind of schools they attended. The elementary schools at this time may be divided into three classes :—(a) public schools under Government inspection ; (b) public schools not under Government inspection, and consequently not receiving Government grants ; and (c) private adventure and dames' schools. The term "public school" may be understood to include all elementary schools which were not carried on for purposes of private gain ; and that practically means the schools connected with the following societies :—The National Society for the Education of the Children of the Poor in the Principles

of the Church of England, the British and Foreign School Society, the Wesleyan Education Committee, the Roman Catholic Poor School Society, the Congregational Board of Education, and the Ragged School Union.

Of these societies the two first-named were the oldest and largest. The chief points of difference between them were in regard to the religious teaching given in the schools and to the method of control. In the National Schools the formularies of the Church of England were taught; in the British Schools only Bible teaching on unsectarian lines was given. In the National Schools the management was restricted by a religious test, and frequently by a high property qualification, whilst the clergyman and the bishop were given *ex-officio* some exclusive powers of control. In the British Schools, on the other hand, the management was thrown open freely to all subscribers. In other respects there was little difference between the schools of the two societies. Judged by modern standards, the great bulk of these schools were seriously defective in buildings, staffing and equipment, though here and there one might attain a high level of efficiency. Yet when we remember the difficulties under which they laboured, the wonder is that they accomplished any really effective educational work at all. For many years they carried on their work without a penny of State aid, and at no time were the Government grants anything like commensurate with the needs of the schools; the public was apathetic, and there were no means of securing regularity of attendance, or of retaining the children at school to an age when good results might be looked for; moreover, there was a strong prejudice against popular education on the part of many of the ruling classes,—a prejudice of which a fairly striking example may be found in the fact that the Vice-President of the Council, Sir Charles Adderly—the man who of all others should have been

keen to promote popular education—could give expression to such a sentiment as this: "Any attempt to keep the children of the labouring classes under intellectual culture after the very earliest age at which they could earn their living would be as arbitrary and improper as it would be to keep the boys at Eton and Harrow at spade labour."

Amidst such discouraging circumstances the two great societies carried on with unflagging zeal their truly patriotic work, until at the time of the introduction of the Education Bill in 1870 they were between them responsible for by far the greater part of the elementary education of the country which could by any means be called efficient. To ridicule the efforts of these pioneer educationists would be as foolish as to depreciate Columbus for taking ten weeks to cross the Atlantic. They pointed out the way, and did more than can easily be estimated to make possible the educational advances of the last thirty years.

The earlier schools, both of the National and the British and Foreign Societies, were planned with a view to the whole school being taught in one room, the idea being that one capable master, assisted by monitors, could very well take charge of a roomful of 500 or even 1000 children. The monitorial system consisted in setting children of ten or eleven years of age to teach those who were a degree more ignorant than themselves; it was of course grotesquely inefficient, and had nothing whatever to recommend it except cheapness. The pupil-teacher system was a development from this of which some of our educationists were very proud. It had been adopted in Holland, whither the British public was being taught to look for examples of educational efficiency. But Holland found the system wanting, and to a great extent abandoned it just as it was becoming general in England. "But England," as an acute chronicler<sup>1</sup> of our educational history

<sup>1</sup> H. Holman, M.A., in *English National Education*.

remarks, "is the country in which dead systems of education live." The system consisted in apprenticing a boy or girl of thirteen for a term of years to the work of teaching; he might then go to college for a few years or he might not. Of the pupil-teacher system, as it exists to-day under the London School Board, something will be said in a later chapter.

In the more recently built public schools there were generally a few classrooms, though the main schoolroom was still occupied by many classes simultaneously. In many cases even the public schools were housed in buildings erected for other purposes—basements of chapels, railway arches, workshops and private houses being adapted for the purpose. On account of the congestion of population and the costliness of sites, London schools seem to have been specially bad; in the reports of Government inspectors one often finds comments on the poor accommodation, the want of ventilation, and even the dirtiness of these schools. Matthew Arnold in his report for the year 1860 contrasts London schools with those of Paris, very much to the disadvantage of the former. "In Paris," he says, "the public primary schools are in general excellently kept; while there are few indeed of the schools under my inspection in London which I could show to a Parisian inspector without apologising for their want of cleanliness. Paint and whitewash are doled out with a very sparing hand, and walls and woodwork show this."

The quality of the teaching was often on a par with the buildings in which it was given. The Newcastle Commissioners were by no means severe in their strictures upon the existing state of things. "We do not think," they reported, "that it warrants very gloomy views or calls for extreme measures." Nevertheless, some of the facts to which they called attention were sufficiently disquieting to anyone with a sound conception of what a national system of education ought to be. The inspection of schools, as hitherto carried on,



furnished but a poor criterion of the value of the instruction given. Teachers were too apt to devote a lot of attention to the production of a showy first class, to the neglect of the great bulk of the scholars, who never reached the first class and left school with the merest smattering of knowledge. "The mass of the children," said the Commissioners, "get little more than a trick of mechanically pronouncing the letters, and the words which they read convey hardly any ideas to their minds." Only about one-fourth of the children attained any tolerable facility in reading, writing and arithmetic. The Commissioners thought it should be possible, "if teachers had a strong motive to bring it about," for at least three-fifths of the children on the books of the schools (the three-fifths who were shown to attend 100 days and upwards in the year), "to read and write without conscious difficulty, and to perform such arithmetical operations as occur in the common business of life."

Such was the modest ambition of the Newcastle Commission. But to reach even that level required a "strong motive," which Mr Lowe (afterwards Lord Sherbrooke), who was then Vice-President of the Council, proceeded to apply. The motive was found in the system of payment by results. By the New Code of 1862 grants were to be made in strict proportion to the number of children who satisfied the inspectors in reading, writing and arithmetic. This plan had a simplicity and a promise of tangible results for money spent which appealed strongly to a commercial generation. There was an uneasy feeling, stimulated by the Report of the Newcastle Commission, that in the matter of education the nation did not get its money's worth. Many of the denominational schools had long been receiving State subsidies for which they gave very little return in the way of educational efficiency. Mr Lowe hoped to change all this by withholding subsidies from schools which could not show

fair educational results. He could not promise efficiency, but there should be either cheapness or efficiency. "If the New Code," said he, "is not efficient it shall be cheap; and if it is not cheap it shall be efficient."

The immediate results of the new plan were hardly such as its authors had desired. After a few years' experience of payment by results, Matthew Arnold declared that the remedy had been worse than the disease it was meant to cure. Probably a certain number of children did learn to read and write who, without the application of this stimulus to their teachers, would never have done so. But the anxiety of teachers and managers of the baser sort to make the most of the little money-making machines under their care led to some startling results. We read of an inspector being asked to examine a few children separately because it was not safe for them to mix with their schoolfellows, and of his finding the mother of one of these children crying outside the door from anxiety respecting her little boy, who had been brought out of his sickroom to be present at the examination. Under the New Code nothing was to be paid for but reading, writing and arithmetic; therefore nothing else should be taught, and soon the inspectors were lamenting the decline in the teaching of geography, grammar, and other subjects.

"The school examinations," said Matthew Arnold in his report for the year 1869, "in view of payment by results are, as I have said, a game of mechanical contrivance in which the teachers will and must more and more learn how to beat us. It is found possible by ingenious preparation to get children through the Revised Code examination in reading, writing and ciphering without their really knowing how to read, write and cipher. To take the commonest instance: a book is selected at the beginning of the year for the children of a certain standard; all the year the children read this book over and over again, and no other.

When the inspector comes they are presented to read in this book ; they can read their sentence or two fluently enough, but they cannot read any other book fluently."

Of the condition of uninspected schools we naturally have not so much information. But we may safely assume that it was some degrees worse than that of the inspected schools. Except in a very few instances, where conscientious scruples prevented the acceptance of Government grants, we may be sure that schools would have welcomed inspection had their condition been such as to make it profitable. In 1870 the majority of the children of the country were in schools of the less efficient type. Mr Forster, when introducing his Education Bill, stated that there were about 950,000 children between the ages of six and twelve whose education was being helped by Government grants, while there were about 1,500,000 children of the same age receiving no such aid.

Probably the greatest cause of weakness, both in the inspected and uninspected schools, was the irregularity of attendance and the short time during which children remained at school. According to the Newcastle Commission, the great majority of children left when they were between the ages of ten and eleven. Matthew Arnold reported that nearly half the children he examined in 1869 had been less than one year at school, a quarter had been at school for one year and less than two years, and the remaining quarter had been at school more than two years.

The Report of the Newcastle Commission abounds in curious little items which help us to realise the character and equipment of the schools of this period. One of the Assistant Commissioners for London speaks of a public school at which four boys were employed during the writing lesson in carrying ink pots up and down between the parallel desks, so that their school-fellows might dip their pens into the ink as they

passed; of another where the boys on arrival threw their caps into a basket which was then hauled up by a pulley to the ceiling; and of another in which it was a fundamental rule, made in deference to the wish of the pious founder, that no reading book other than the Bible should be used in the school.

If such was the condition of the public schools—those which were supported by the funds of the great societies and in many cases by Government grants—what could be expected of the private schools? It must be remembered that we are dealing exclusively with elementary schools, by which term are to be understood schools at which the fees did not exceed 9d. a week. Private schools of this type have long been practically extinct all over England, but prior to the Act of 1870 they formed a very important factor in the educational machinery of the country. In the districts of London which were investigated by the Newcastle Commission it was found that private schools accounted for one-third of the children attending elementary schools. Very few of these schools had the slightest claim to efficiency. They were held in all sorts of unsuitable premises, often in living rooms which were used simultaneously for other occupations. The teachers were almost invariably men who had failed in other occupations, or old women who had no other means of earning a livelihood. In many cases the schools were without any scholastic equipment whatever, unless a cane could be so described. The children brought their own books, or more often fragments of books, and as often as not they sat on the floor. Not five per cent. of the teachers had had any training for their work, and in many cases they were almost incredibly ignorant.

One of the Assistant Commissioners of the Newcastle Commission thus summarises his impressions of the private school teachers in the part of London covered by his investigations: "None are too old, too poor, too ignorant, too feeble, too sickly, too unqualified

in any or every way to regard themselves and to be regarded by others as fit for school keeping. Nay, there are few, if any, occupations regarded as incompatible with school keeping, if not as simultaneous, at least as preparatory employments. Domestic servants out of place, discharged barmaids, vendors of toys and lollipops, keepers of small eating-houses, of mangles or of small lodging-houses, needlewomen who take in plain or slop work, milliners, consumptive patients in an advanced stage, cripples almost bedridden, persons of at least doubtful temperance, outdoor paupers, men and women of seventy or eighty years of age, persons who spell badly, who can scarcely write, and who cannot cipher at all; such are some of the teachers, not in remote rural districts, but in the heart of London."

Turning from the general to the particular, let us take a couple of examples of London schools visited by one of the Commissioners:—

(a) "Mr ——. Males, twelve; females, two. This school is held at the top of a very steep and broken staircase, and in a room more like a carpenter's shop than a schoolroom. It is impossible to describe the poverty and decay which everything indicated. The chief text-book seemed to be a kitten to which all the children were very attentive. The room is small and unventilated. Window dirty. Mr — is a young man, very pale and sickly in appearance. Between school hours he does carpenter's work at the desk and benches which he is fitting up. He expressed a strong wish to have an arithmetic book and a grammar for his own improvement. I promised to send him both. His mother keeps a marine store on the ground floor."

(b) "Mrs ——. Male, one; females, six. Widow aged about seventy. Her husband died twelve years ago through intemperance. She receives 2s. 6d. a week from the Union; seven pupils at 3d. each make 1s. 9d., and this is her income. She was very grateful for the

small donation of a shilling. She complains of inability to buy meat, 'and without meat her strength fails.' She is very weary of life, and hopes her time on earth will not be long."

It seems strange that any parents should have preferred these wretched private schools to the public schools which, with all their imperfections, never sank to anything like these scandalous depths. One reason seems to be that many parents regarded the private schools as more "genteel" than the public schools. How else can we explain such a case as the following, which is recorded in the Report of the Newcastle Commission? "A poor cripple, without legs from infancy, was brought up in a National School. When about fourteen, possessing good abilities and teaching power, he was retained as a monitor until eighteen, when he was dismissed for misconduct. He then opened a school on his own account and got twenty or thirty boys. This failed through his misconduct, and for some years he lived on alms, wheeling himself about the streets. Once more he tried a school, through the help of friends, who thought he had improved in character. He then took two rooms in a small court close by a National School in high repute, under an excellent certificated master, an assistant, and five pupil teachers, where the fee is 2d. a week, and 1d. extra for drawing. There are 150 boys and there is room for fifty more. The private school, under the cripple, is crowded to excess. The room being about 20 feet by 10 feet, and 8 feet high, the children have scarcely room to sit. Fees 3d. and 6d. Boys are sometimes taken from the first, second and third classes of the National School to be *finished* at this private school."

After the publication of the Report of the Newcastle Commission there could no longer be any doubt as to the extremely unsatisfactory condition of popular education in England, and the feeling that some large measure of reform was called for grew in strength and was not confined to men of one party or creed. The

Reform Act of 1867 enfranchised large numbers of the working classes, who began to demand for their children educational advantages equal to those enjoyed by children of their own class in some other countries, and even those who had little sympathy with the aspirations of the working classes recognised the force of the argument "we must educate our masters."

Other nations were seen to be forging ahead in the provision of education for their children, and considerations of national safety and of patriotism demanded that England should no longer lag behind. A diagram issued by Mr Keith Johnston, the geographer, giving a comparative view of the percentage of population receiving instruction in the different countries of Europe showed that England stood tenth on the list. How strongly such considerations appealed to the framers and supporters of the Education Bill was shown in the debates in Parliament. Mr Forster in introducing the Bill argued that upon the speedy provision of elementary education depended our industrial prosperity, the safe working of our constitutional system and our national power. "Civilised communities throughout the world are massing themselves together, each mass being measured by its force, and if we are to hold our position among men of our own race or among the nations of the world, we must make up for the smallness of our numbers by increasing the intellectual force of the individual."

Mr Mundella in the debate on the second reading advanced a similar argument. He had had an examination made of the children in schools at Loughborough, and contrasted the results with the work of children of the same age in Germany and Switzerland. "The contrast," he said, "in the specimens of writing and arithmetic was enough to make an Englishman blush for his country." He went on to point out that in 1869, in Birmingham and Liverpool, out of a population of 600,000 only 530 pupils came up to the sixth standard.

While in Prussia no child left school till his education reached a higher level than was represented by our sixth standard.

When it became evident that some large measure of educational reform was inevitable, several organisations sprang into existence with the object of enforcing their special views as to the lines on which the impending educational settlement should be made. Of these the most important were the Education League, generally known as the Birmingham League, and the National Education Union.

The Birmingham League, of which Mr George Dixon was chairman, Mr Joseph Chamberlain vice-chairman, and Mr Jesse Collings honorary secretary, aimed at establishing a national system of education which should be free, compulsory and unsectarian. The League did not as a body seek to exclude religious teaching, but it was opposed to all denominational teaching in State-aided schools. The National Education Union, which included amongst its members the whole of the bench of bishops, was avowedly formed to counteract the work of the Birmingham League. The two organisations represented the two opposing schools of thought which have so often, both before and since that time, contended for the predominance in our elementary education system. The settlement of 1870 established for a while something like a state of equilibrium between the two forces. The League and the Union were both very active in the country immediately before and for some time after the passing of Mr Forster's Bill, and both were very influentially supported. We need not trace their activities in any detail, but their existence should be borne in mind in seeking to appreciate the nature of the problem which the Government of 1870 sought to solve.

The chief provisions of the Act of 1870 are sufficiently well known, and need not be recapitulated here. But the Bill as introduced differed considerably



from that which received the royal assent. In framing the Bill and in commending it to the House of Commons Mr Forster adopted a line of compromise. He aimed at filling up the gaps in the existing educational system rather than at establishing a radically new system. Recognising the two opposing schools of thought, Mr Forster sought to conciliate both. "We think," he said, "the Bill will be supported by both those who wish to protect the present system of education and those who wish to change it. On the one hand we acknowledge and make the utmost possible use of present educational efforts—of the efforts of the members and of those who sympathise with the views of the Educational Union; on the other hand we assert in the strongest language that it is the duty of Government to take care that in every locality throughout the kingdom elementary education is provided by help of local agency, and that is the principle of the Educational League." Naturally a Bill so framed failed to win the enthusiastic approval of either school. But it passed; and on the whole it worked well for more than thirty years.

The amendments made during the progress of the Bill through Committee were mostly in a democratic direction. It is interesting to note the three chief alterations made, because later controversies have so largely turned on the same points: (*a*) School Boards were to be chosen by direct election by the ratepayers, not by the local government bodies as originally proposed. (*b*) Religious teaching in rate-supported schools was to be undenominational; no religious catechism or religious formulary which is distinctive of any particular denomination might be taught. This was the famous Cowper-Temple clause. (*c*) There was to be no rate aid for voluntary schools. Thus it will be seen that the Education Act of 1902 is in some respects on the lines of the unamended Bill of 1870.

It has been urged against Mr Forster's Act that it was only a temporary settlement after all; but how, it

may well be asked, can permanence be predicated for any Act of Parliament? Does anyone suppose the latest Education Acts will endure a quarter as long as the Act of 1870? Although from its very nature that Act was bound to be in some respects disappointing to some of the most ardent educational reformers, it must be regarded, in view of all that it has meant to England during the past thirty years, as a great piece of constructive statesmanship. It was a fine attempt to accomplish a revolution by mutual consent; it provided an instrument which might be used, and was used, by all who cared for educational progress, to whatever creed or party they belonged; and it left no section of the community smarting under a sense of injustice.

## CHAPTER II

### THE FIRST SCHOOL BOARD

LONDON has never been distinguished by a consuming zeal in the cause of popular education, but there have been times when its citizens have been aroused from their usual lethargic attitude sufficiently to understand and express their opinions on certain broad aspects of the educational problem. We have recently seen what widespread interest has been aroused in the question of the supersession of the London School Board, and it is not surprising that at least equal interest should have been taken in the initiation of the School Board system—practically the first assertion of public rights and public duties in regard to the education of children.

In 1870 the discussions in Parliament and the country had familiarised people with the main outlines of the problem to which the Education Act of that year offered a solution. The needs of London in the matter of elementary schools were sufficiently notorious, though the exact extent of those needs was not ascertained until later. The plan of entrusting to the people themselves, acting through a popularly elected body, the duty of setting their educational house in order had in it not only the attractive element of novelty but, to thoughtful minds, the promise of a great and sadly-needed reformation. It was this consideration which led so many men of light and leading, who would not have entered into the turmoil of an ordinary political contest, to offer themselves as candidates for

the first London School Board; and no doubt the *Times* on the morning of the election fairly reflected the views of serious and intelligent people as to the dignity and importance of the new authority, when it said: "No equally powerful body will exist in England outside Parliament, if power be measured by influence for good or evil over masses of human beings."

The chief issue that divided the candidates at this, as at so many subsequent elections, was the nature of the religious teaching, if any, to be given in the schools, and there can be no doubt that many of the electors cast their votes for the candidates whose views accorded with their own on this question, irrespective of their fitness in other respects. But the result was not, as might have been feared, the return of a Board of strong partisans on this particular question, but ignorant of and indifferent to the details of the educational problem.

The *Times* in its leading article of November 29, 1870, from which I have already quoted, advises electors to choose the best candidates, irrespective of "tickets": "There is such a thing as being more anxious to elect thoroughly efficient members of the School Board than to secure the triumph of a particular dogma, religious or political; there is such a thing as desiring to see an equally satisfactory representation of all parties, creeds and classes, including those which are not our own." Whether few or many of the electors voted on the lines of enlightened impartiality thus laid down it is impossible to say; but had they all done so, the result could hardly have been better than what actually occurred. Among the forty-seven men and two women, who formed the first London School Board,<sup>1</sup> the most divergent schools of thought, political and religious, and many different classes of society were effectively represented. And what was still more important, it was not a Board of hack politicians and axe-grinders, but of

<sup>1</sup> The number of seats was afterwards increased to fifty-five, and the proportion of women was greater on all subsequent Boards.

public-spirited citizens anxious to turn to the best account the new instrument for social service which the Education Act had placed in their hands. It was a genuine zeal for education which then, and many times afterwards in the history of the London School Board, united the seemingly discordant elements in the cause of educational efficiency. Even when in after years the Board-room seemed to have become the cockpit of wrangling sectarians, the Board was saved from complete ineptitude by the fact that nearly all its members were genuine educationists, who were anxious, in spite of all differences, to get forward with their real work of educating the half million children for whom they were responsible.

The London School Board has never failed to enlist in its service men and women of high character and great ability ; but never since, probably, has quite so distinguished a company been brought together in a School Board as that which, by the courtesy of the City authorities, assembled for the first time in the Guildhall on December 15, 1870. To run through the list of members is to recall the names of many who played a conspicuous part in the story of the nineteenth century, including some who, happily, are still labouring for the public weal.

Lord John Lawrence, who was at once chosen as the first chairman, was a man whose presidency would have given distinction to any assembly. He had lately returned from India where, in the high office of Viceroy, he had put the crown to the great reputation for energy, courage and administrative genius which he won during the stirring times of the Mutiny ; a man of strong sense of duty and simple piety, whose character is aptly indicated by the words on his memorial in Westminster Abbey—"He feared men so little because he feared God so much." A no less notable figure was that of Professor Huxley, then at the zenith of his fame as one of the greatest men of science of his time and the pro-

tagonist of scientific Agnosticism. The Rev. W. H. Thorold was a zealous and hard-working clergyman, who afterwards, as Bishop of Rochester, displayed in another great sphere the industry and organising skill that made him an invaluable member of the School Board. A cleric of a different type was the Rev. William Rogers, who had already won his spurs as an educational reformer; a man of broad views and tolerant spirit, whose advocacy of secular education in middle-class schools made him a little distrusted in certain quarters, and earned for him his famous soubriquet of "Hang theology" Rogers, but whose great social gifts and irrepressible humour made him a universal favourite. In Mr W. H. Smith, M.P., the Board had the services of a successful business man and a successful politician, one whose uprightness and courtesy earned the respect of friend and foe alike, and whose foresight, tact and shrewdness made him as influential in the counsels of the Board as afterwards in those of his party in Parliament. Three other members of Parliament who came to the School Board each with a well-deserved reputation were Lord Sandon (afterwards the Earl of Harrowby), who was presently to occupy the first position in educational administration, that of President of Council of Education; Mr (afterwards Sir Charles) Reed, a Liberal and Nonconformist who was held in high esteem amongst all sections of the Board, and who succeeded to the Chairmanship on the retirement of Lord Lawrence; and Mr M'Cullagh Torrens, who might not inaptly be called "the father of the London School Board," inasmuch as it was his amendment to the Education Bill that led to its establishment. Mr Samuel Morley was well known in his time as the head of a great business house, as a Liberal politician of useful rather than brilliant parts, and as an influential Nonconformist; but the reputation which has survived him is mainly that of a great philanthropist. If a lifetime spent in unpaid labours for the public good

entitle a man to be called a philanthropist, that honour belongs equally to Mr John Macgregor, who is also remembered as "Rob Roy," the intrepid traveller and the



*Photo. by]*

SIR CHARLES REED, M.P.

*[Elliott & Fry.*

patron saint of canoe-men. Dr Barry was an expert educationist; he was for many years Principal of King's College, and afterwards became Bishop of Sydney. Dr Angus and Dr Rigg were representative Nonconformist

divines and both principals of colleges. Mr Benjamin Lucraft was a working cabinetmaker, a man of strong personality and independent spirit, who very ably represented the classes whose children were presently to fill the Board Schools. The Rev. Benjamin Waugh was a young Congregational minister, whose greatest qualification, perhaps, was his intense love for children, a love that has since found expression in many years of strenuous service as Director of the National Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Children.

Such were some of the men who formed the first London School Board. Nor must we omit to mention Dr Elizabeth Garrett (afterwards Mrs Garrett Anderson) and Miss Davies, the first of a succession of able and devoted women who have clearly proved, if proof were needed, the capacity of women for this kind of public service. It is noteworthy that from the first lady candidates have generally been popular with the electors; both Miss Garrett and Miss Davies were elected at the top of the poll in their respective divisions, and Miss Garrett polled by far the largest number of votes recorded for any candidate throughout London.

It was well for London and for England that at that fateful moment when the nation decided that the education of the citizens was to be the concern of the State, so much ability, character and public spirit were available to start the metropolis on its new career. For upon the decisions of London's first School Board, and still more on the spirit in which it approached and carried on its work, the future course of elementary education in London, and to a scarcely less degree throughout England, would depend.

The Education Act of 1870 may well be regarded as one of the great landmarks of progress of the nineteenth century. But its greatness consisted not in laying down a uniform and detailed system of educational administration, but in setting the country free to work out its



own educational salvation. Had London and the country generally declined to rise to the height of this great opportunity; had the School Boards been chiefly filled with believers in the old doctrine that it is dangerous to educate "the lower orders," or in the modern modification of the same philosophy which holds that a grounding in "the three R's" is quite as much education as the working classes have any right to expect; had they said "we will administer this Act so far as we are obliged, but we will not go a step farther," the educational history of the last thirty years would have been very different. The Act was permissive in several important respects, and the decisions of the first Board on certain great lines of policy which the Act left open were calculated to become, and as a matter of fact have become, part of the fixed educational system of the metropolis. Moreover, this was a case in which it might truly be said that, "what London does to-day England will do to-morrow." Hundreds of smaller Boards have modelled their bye-laws chiefly on those of the London Board, and have been influenced consciously or unconsciously by the liberal spirit of the first Board. Lord Lawrence clearly showed that he recognised this double responsibility when, at the first meeting of the Board, in returning thanks for his election to the chair, he said: "I trust that by God's help we shall be able to do the work in such a way as to afford an example to the whole kingdom, and to establish a sound and excellent system of education for the great masses of the people."

There were three chief matters on which the Act allowed an option to the School Boards, and on which the decision of the first London Board proved very influential. First there was the question whether religious teaching should be given in the schools, and, if so, what its nature should be; then there was the question whether attendance at school was to be voluntary or compulsory, and finally there was the question of the status and duties of local managers.

The Board's dealings with the thorny subject of religious instruction will be dealt with at greater length in a future chapter. Here it is sufficient to record the



*Photo. by]*

MR W. H. SMITH, M.P.

*[Fradelle & Young.*

decision arrived at, after a good deal of discussion, on March 8, 1871. On that day the following resolution, which constitutes the famous "School Board Compromise," was proposed by Mr W. H. Smith, and

carried by a majority of 38 to 3: "That in the schools provided by the Board the Bible shall be read, and there shall be given such explanations and such instruction therefrom in the principles of morality and religion as are suited to the capacities of the children, provided always (1) that in such explanations and instruction the provisions of the Act in sections 7 and 14 be strictly observed, both in letter and spirit, and that no attempt be made in any such schools to attach children to any particular denomination; (2) that in regard to any particular school the Board shall consider and determine, upon any application by managers, parents or ratepayers of the district who may show special cause for exception of the school from the operation of this resolution in whole or in part." The sections of the Act referred to provide for the withdrawal of scholars from religious instruction if their parents desire it, and prohibit the teaching of any catechism or religious formulary which is distinctive of any particular denomination. The "Compromise" thus arrived at by a number of earnest men and women of very different religious views was very generally adopted by School Boards throughout the country. Religious instruction on these lines constitutes the "School Board religion" to which derisive reference is sometimes made.

The question of compulsion was another on which opinion at the time of the passing of the Act of 1870 was very much divided, and it was probably for that reason that the Act gave a very free hand in the matter to the School Boards. No compulsion to attend school might be applied to a child under five or over thirteen years of age, but within these limits the Boards might make whatever regulations they considered most desirable. The decision of the London Board was to make attendance compulsory for the full period allowed by the Act, but the hardship which might be felt by poor parents who depended on their children's earnings was

mitigated by the regulations which allowed total exemption from school attendance to children over ten years of age who had passed Standard V., and partial exemption, that is the right to attend as half-timers, to children who were proved to be "beneficially and necessarily at work for the maintenance of themselves or their parents." These regulations have since been considerably stiffened, so that now no child may absent himself from school till he has either reached the age of fourteen years or passed the Seventh Standard. In 1871, however, they no doubt represented the extreme limit to which the principle of compulsion could safely be carried. The boldness of the Board's action in this matter may be appreciated when we remember that the bitter opposition of large numbers of parents might be counted on with certainty; that this opposition was supported by a not inconsiderate section of doctrinaire politicians, who saw in compulsion some violation of the principle of personal liberty; that the attitude of the majority of parents was quite an unknown quantity, and that, as the enforcement of compulsion meant the spending of money, the watchful and parsimonious ratepayer might be depended upon to make himself heard.

In this matter again the action of the Board had important and far-reaching effects. Not only were its bye-laws adopted by many provincial Boards, but there is no doubt that the fact of compulsion having been for some years the rule in London, and having been enforced with a great measure of success, was one of the determining factors that led the Government in 1876 to incorporate the principle in the Education Act of that year.

The third matter in which the policy of the first Board had an important influence on the development of the educational system was the appointment of local managers. By the Education Act of 1870 the Board was empowered to appoint managers for individual

schools or small groups of schools, and to delegate to them any of its powers, with the exception of that of raising money. Here obviously was a possibility for contracting out, so to speak, from many of the most onerous duties of a local educational authority. The Board might, had it so chosen, have left the real administration of the Act to some hundreds of small committees, who would decide the kind of schools to be built, the curriculum to be adopted, the fees to be paid, and a hundred other matters in accordance with purely local considerations or their own idiosyncrasies, and without reference to any general plan. What kind of educational fabric would thus have been built up it is difficult to imagine; certainly there could not have been the steady progress all along the line which uniformity of curriculum and administration alone make possible. But while retaining all the most important matters of administration in its own hands, the Board did not reject the system of local managers, and the help of kindly and tactful managers in intimate relations with the teachers and scholars has again and again proved invaluable in promoting the smooth and efficient working of the great School Board machine.

By passing its bye-laws relating to compulsory attendance the Board was in the rather curious position of declaring that children ought to be attending schools which did not exist. If all the parents in London had determined in 1871 to obey the law, and had clamoured for the admission of their children to the existing elementary schools, many thousands of children must have been turned away from the school doors unable to secure their legal rights and fulfil their legal obligations. That, however, is the sort of thing that doesn't happen, and the members of the Board, being practical men, knew it. Too seriously concerned for practical efficiency to be pedantically logical, they did not hesitate to make the assertion of the parent's duty to send his child to school the first step, and the provision of a school for

the child the second. Had they reversed the process, as one or two of their number were desirous of doing, the effect would have been to defer indefinitely the enforcement of compulsory attendance. As a matter of fact it was more than twenty years later before it could be said that a school place had been provided for every child of school age in London. The Board could not by the wave of a magician's wand cause Board Schools to spring up all over London; sites had to be procured, plans prepared, and the actual deficiency of school places in the particular locality clearly shown before the building of a single school could be begun. But while these preliminaries were being carried out, it would be possible to see that a child was sent to fill every existing school place in every efficient elementary school, and also in some measure to familiarise parents with the idea that to send their children to school was a duty they owed to the children and to the State.

One of the requirements of the Education Act was that the School Board should, within four months of the election of its chairman, furnish to the Education Department a return setting forth the number of children in its district requiring elementary instruction, the provision already made or about to be made to meet these requirements, the number and exact position of the schools the Board proposed to build, with a great many other details. Such particulars, though obtainable without difficulty in the case of a small town, could not have been procured in London without years of work and a very large expenditure of money. Still, it was very desirable that the exact particulars should be known, and it was also desirable that there should be no delay in beginning the tremendous task which the School Board was elected to discharge—the actual work of teaching the thousands of neglected children who were running wild about the streets or engaged in occupations utterly unsuited to their years. The Board, therefore, in its practical, businesslike way, sent in a

partial return to the Education Department, obtained the Department's permission to proceed with the building of twenty schools in districts where the deficiency of accommodation was notorious, and then set to work to make a detailed and extensive survey of the whole field of work into which it had entered.

It happened that the early days of the Board's existence synchronised rather conveniently with the time for the taking of the decennial census, so that the Board was able to avail itself of the new statistics.

According to the Registrar-General's Report, the population of London on the night of April 2, 1871, was 3,266,937, of whom 681,101 were children between the ages of three and thirteen. With the aid of the information furnished by the householders' returns the Board's enumerators pursued their investigations. Verbal inquiries were made at the homes of the children as to what schools, if any, they attended, or as to the cause of absence if no school was attended. After deducting from the total the children who, according to the information obtained by the enumerators, were being educated otherwise than in elementary schools, those who were ill or disabled, those who claimed exemption from school attendance in accordance with the Board's bye-laws, and then making a further deduction for merely temporary absentees, the conclusion was arrived at that about 455,000 children ought to be in the elementary schools of London every day.

Then came the task of determining the extent of the existing school accommodation, and a careful calculation showed that, if all the existing schools were filled to their utmost capacity, more than 81,000 children would still remain outside. But this was not all. It was known that many of the existing schools were of the grossly inefficient character to which reference has been made in the first chapter, establishments which were unworthy the name of "school," and

which it was the Board's duty entirely to supplant. The delicate task of distinguishing between the "efficient" and the "inefficient" schools was undertaken, at the Board's request, by the inspectors of the Education Department. The startling result of this inspection was that about 60 per cent. of the elementary schools of London were condemned as "inefficient" and about  $7\frac{1}{2}$  per cent. were returned as "semi-efficient"; that is to say, efficient as regards premises but inefficient as regards teaching, or *vice versa*. The case, however, was not quite so bad as that statement might seem to imply, for most of the condemned schools were small private schools; the larger schools, being generally controlled by the great societies, were in a better condition. Nevertheless, the fact that, in addition to the large number of children for whom no school accommodation whatever existed, about 64,000 were receiving a mere pretence of an education in schools condemned by the Government inspectors was sufficiently disquieting.

The gross deficiency of school places would be considerably reduced by various building schemes upon which the managers of voluntary schools, stimulated by the Education Act, had somewhat freely entered; and the Board decided, for the purpose of its calculations, to assume that all these projects would be carried out, also that the semi-efficient schools would become efficient, and even that some of the condemned schools would, by transferring themselves to the Board, be rendered efficient. The net result of the investigations was that the Board asked the Education Department to authorise the immediate provision of schools for 100,600 children.

This, then, was the first Board's conception of the extent of the work which lay immediately before it. To provide schools for 100,000 children was no small undertaking, but there can be little doubt that the Board had seriously underestimated the real necessities



of the case. A committee of a later Board in 1879 pointed out many of the errors into which the framers of this estimate had fallen. They had based their calculation on average instead of maximum attendance, so that if the schools were unusually full there would be no places for some of the scholars; they made no provision whatever for children over thirteen years of age, though the law allowed, but did not compel, the attendance of such children, and many were already in the schools; they made deductions on a very ample scale for reasonable causes of absence; they assumed, with a trustfulness that events did not justify, the carrying out of projected building schemes and a widespread reformation among "semi-efficient" and inefficient schools; and—worst error of all—they made no provision for the normal increase of the child population—an increase which would lead to a further deficiency of about 18,000 places before the projected schools were ready for occupation.

The Education Department had a rough and ready way of estimating the number of children requiring elementary education as one-sixth of the total population. More accurate and complete enumerations undertaken by the School Board in recent years have shown this to be a very close approximation to the actual proportion, and it may be presumed, therefore, that it was pretty nearly correct in 1871-72. Had the Board accepted this as a correct estimate it would have seen the need of providing not for 100,000 children only, but for about 193,000. It seems almost incredible that within the memory of middle-aged men the greatest and wealthiest city in the world should have been so wasteful of its most precious resources as to allow one quarter of its child population to remain either absolutely untaught or without any education worthy of the name. The first School Board does not seem to have realised that the case was quite so bad as that; but the fact may well be borne in mind by those who would rightly

estimate the immensity and the urgency of the work which the School Board was created to accomplish.

Two important matters remained to be determined before the foundations of the School Board system could be said to be fully laid, namely the type of school to be built, and the kind of education to be given. In both these directions the Board adopted a liberal and enlightened policy. Something has already been said (Chapter I.) of the miserably cramped and unhealthy premises in which elementary education before 1870 was frequently given. But even the best of the public elementary schools were far from satisfactory according to modern standards. There was nothing in London in 1871 which the Board could well take as a model for school building, and so recourse was had to the school buildings of Germany. It was decided to adopt, with modifications, the Prussian system, the chief feature of which is that every class has a separate room. This departure from the methods of school planning hitherto customary in England was really a great step forward, for not only did it secure to each class quietness and freedom from outside disturbances, but it virtually necessitated the appointment of a well-qualified teacher for every room. The planning of Board Schools has varied a great deal since the first schools were built; improvements have been introduced as experience suggested, and it is now the universal rule to provide, not only a separate classroom for each class, but a large hall in which the whole school can assemble. By comparison with the newest schools those built by the first Board are very far from perfect, but they were a great advance on the then prevailing type.

The scheme of education to be adopted in the schools was drawn up by a special committee presided over by Professor Huxley. The scheme was a remarkably liberal and comprehensive one, and nothing was more significant of the generous and hopeful spirit in which the Board entered on its campaign against

ignorance than the fact that this scheme was adopted with but very slight modifications. It was decided that the Board School curriculum should include instruction

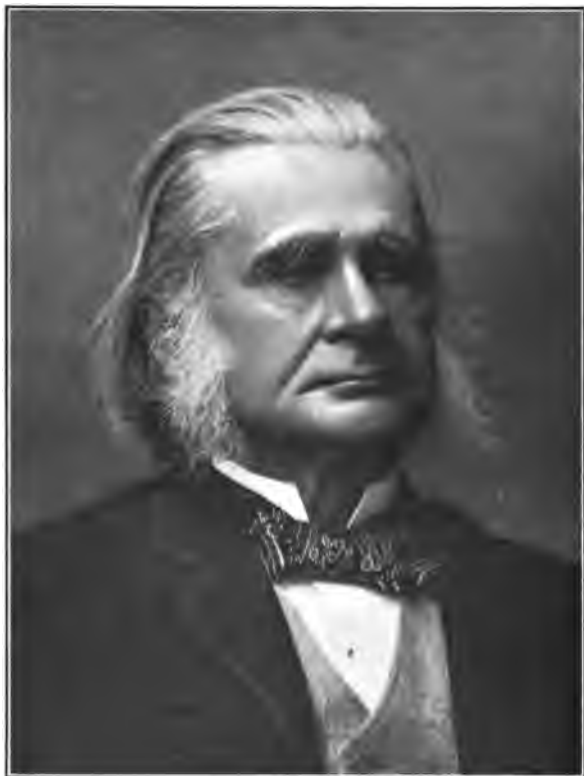


*Photo. by]*

PROFESSOR HUXLEY.

*[Mayall & Co., Ltd.*

in morality and religion, reading, writing, arithmetic, English grammar, elementary physical science, geography, English history, elementary social economy, drawing, singing, mensuration (in boys' schools), needle-

work (in girls' schools), and physical exercises ; and there were added as "discretionary subjects," which might be included at the discretion of the managers or by the special direction of the Board, algebra, geometry, domestic economy (for girls), and "any extra subjects recognised by the new Code, 1871"—a provision which covered any definite subject of instruction approved by the Government inspector.

This seems a pretty formidable programme ; but it is not to be supposed that many of the earliest *protégés* of the School Board ever troubled themselves about the angles of isosceles triangles or the provisions of Magna Carta ; it was necessary to breed a sturdier race before such dizzy intellectual heights could be scaled. Perhaps the chief value at first of the curriculum of study was as a confession of faith. By building schools on the best extant model and adopting a broad and comprehensive scheme of study the Board was putting on record its conception of what an elementary school should be. The Board might have decided to teach only those subjects which the Education Department demanded, and for which Government grants were obtainable ; that is to say, reading, writing and arithmetic for all scholars, and two other subjects for those in Standards IV., V. and VI. It preferred, however, to regard the Code subjects as the minimum rather than the maximum of instruction to be given, and thus established the precedent, which successive Boards have continually followed, of leading rather than following in the wake of the Education Department.

When it is remembered that the cost of everything in the scheme of instruction beyond the grant-earning subjects mentioned in the Code would necessarily fall on the ratepayers, who were not then inured by long custom to the payment of an education rate, it will not be a matter of surprise that severe criticism was levelled against the Board on the score of extravagance. Nor was the criticism confined to the curriculum of study ;

the cost of building, the salaries of teachers and office expenses were all declared to be exorbitantly high by those who adopted towards popular education an attitude quite different from that of the School Board. The noteworthy thing is not that attacks were made on the Board, but that it had the grit and force needed to press on in spite of all attacks steadily towards the accomplishment of the ideal it had set before itself.

So fast and furious came the charges of extravagance that the Statistical Committee was asked to formulate a general reply, which the Board ordered to be entered on the Minutes. With regard to the curriculum of study, it was pointed out that "the programme may be regarded as setting forth what is ultimately desirable rather than what is at present attainable." The charges of building unnecessary schools, paying unnecessarily high salaries and maintaining unnecessarily expensive offices were examined in detail and pretty completely answered; but probably the most interesting passage in the report from the point of view of to-day is that which points out the actual cost to the ratepayers of the work, so far as it had then proceeded. The total amount levied by two precepts in order to meet all expenditure up to Lady Day 1873, that is for two years and four months, was £115,000, which was equivalent to a rate on the whole of less than 1½d. in the pound. In other words the expenditure of the London School Board for the first two years and four months of its existence was met by a rate of rather less than three-fifths of a penny in the pound per annum. Is it a sign of growing popular enlightenment, or merely of the philosophical acceptance of troubles that have become familiar, that we make less fuss to-day about our 1s. 3d. rate than our fathers did about their three-fifths of a penny?

The extent of the work of the first London School Board is not to be measured by the number of its

schools nor by the number of its pupils, nor even by the degree of efficiency the schools had attained. When the Board ended its career in November 1873 it had fewer than 60,000 scholars under its care, and most of these were in schools transferred to the Board or in merely temporary premises; moreover, the Board's Statistical Committee frankly admitted that the Board Schools in these early days were not up to the average level of other efficient schools. The great work of the first Board was to lay the foundations on which others were to build up the great School Board system, as we have known it in these latter years. The excellence of the superstructure is the best evidence that the foundations were well and truly laid.

## CHAPTER III

### THE FIRST BOARD SCHOOLS

AS we have seen, the School Board had many thousands of children under its care before a single new school had been built. By the Act of 1870 it had power either to accept or decline the transfer to its authority of existing schools. It was not long before applications began to pour in to the Board Offices from the managers of British Schools, National Schools, the schools of the Ragged School Union, the Congregational Board and other authorities who desired to hand over the charge of their schools to the new body. The applications were not accepted indiscriminately; the Board had in each case to take account of the needs of the neighbourhood, the suitability or otherwise of the building for school purposes, its state of repair and the terms of tenure. Moreover, it was, speaking generally, the least prosperous schools which made haste to invoke the aid of the School Board; for although there were some authorities who as a matter of principle welcomed public control for their schools, there were others who were only driven into the arms of the School Board by their financial embarrassments.

As to the buildings, we have already seen how inconvenient and defective school buildings of this period generally were. But it would have been a long time before the School Board could possibly have had any considerable number of schools of its own; for,

apart from the time taken in building, the acquisition of the site was often a tedious matter, involving prolonged negotiations; and the only way by which the School Board could at once begin the educational work for which it had been elected was by accepting with all their deficiencies a large number of the schools offered for transfer, and using them as temporary buildings while the new Board Schools were being got ready.

The process of transfer has gone on at intervals throughout the Board's history. The Report for 1902-03 records that the total number of schools taken over since 1871 is 163, and of these 147 have been closed, the children being drafted into new schools erected by the Board,—a fact which sufficiently shows the inferiority of the old type of school building. At least one more voluntary school has become a Board School since the date of that report.

The building of schools began, as has been already pointed out, before the detailed investigations designed to show the precise deficiency in each locality had been completed. The first schools were erected in places where the need for more schools was obvious and notorious. The Rev. William Rogers at the opening of the Board's first school, that at Old Castle Street, Whitechapel, described how he had taken some of his fellow-members for a walk in the district; they found the children at eleven o'clock in the morning swarming in the streets like locusts, and they agreed that statistics were all nonsense and a Board School must be built there at once. There was indeed little fear in these early days of unnecessary schools being built.

While the first schools were in course of construction, the Board's visitors were busy enforcing the bye-laws relating to compulsory attendance, with the result that the number of children in attendance both at the Board's temporary schools and at the voluntary schools rapidly increased. By the time of the opening of the Old Castle



Street School there were nearly 50,000 children attending the temporary schools.

The ceremony of opening the first permanent school was performed by Lord Lawrence, the Chairman of the Board, on the 7th July 1873. It must have seemed to many present on that occasion as if they were inaugurating an era of educational palaces, so far superior was the building to the general run of elementary schools of that day. Many, too, who had been concerned in the erection of schools under other conditions must have reflected on the contrast between the ease with which this costly and well-equipped building was provided, without involving an appreciable burden to anyone, and the pinching and screwing, the begging for subscriptions, the minimising of appliances and cutting down of estimates, which had been the normal concomitants of elementary school provision under the old *régime*.

It must not be supposed, however, that everything was plain sailing as soon as the fine new building had been opened. The Old Castle Street School was for some time practically boycotted by the inhabitants of the district, who were nearly all Jews, and who suspected that the chief aim of the new school was the proselytising of their children. This special local difficulty was got over by the appointment of a Jewish headmaster, under whose care the school soon became both popular and efficient. But there were other difficulties of a more general character against which the early Board Schools had to contend.

In some districts of London building a Board School was like planting a fort in an enemy's country. The building was the symbol of tyranny and oppression, and often the school keeper had difficulty in protecting it from malicious damage. The School Board was the public enemy, depriving honest citizens of the services of their children, taking the children from profitable employment in shop and factory and setting them to

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the profitless tasks of learning to read and write. The teacher was a base creature who exploited the labour of the children for his own gain, and whom it was a meritorious act to thwart and trick in any possible way; and the School Board visitor who drove the children to school was a fit target for abusive witticisms, if not for still more offensive missiles. The headmaster of a Walworth school told me that he remembers seeing the school corridor thronged with men and women who had come up to demand their children at the stroke of 12 or 4.30. "You have had him for your two and a half hours," they would argue. "Now I want him to do a turn for me. He has been putting money into your pocket, now I want him to put some into mine." And the unfortunate child would be sent off laden with a basket of fish or oranges, or perhaps dragged away home to turn the mangle.

It was not to be supposed that the children of such parents would make the most apt pupils. They would begin their school life with a strongly implanted prejudice against schools and teachers, and every advance made by the teachers in the direction of reconciling them with school life and interesting them in their studies would be checked by adverse home influences. Then there were others—for the School Board net caught all kinds of fish—with whom the difficulties were chiefly personal. The wild neglected children of the street, with whom home ties were of the loosest and who were already tradesmen on their own account, did not willingly surrender their freedom, nor did they, when caught, take kindly to the orderly and disciplined life of a school.

It was impossible to grade the schools, as we find them now; for the great majority of the children of all ages were in Standard I., the lowest class of the present-day school, or in a class below that. Boys and girls of eleven and twelve, who had never had a day's schooling

in their lives, would have to be taught, with children of seven or eight, the very rudiments of learning ; and consequently much of the strength of the school would be given to work that is now done entirely in the infants' departments.

But the scholastic deficiencies were not the worst of the trouble. Many of the children were entirely undisciplined and uninstructed in the rudiments of good manners. The virtues of obedience, self-control and personal cleanliness had to be inculcated with at least as much energy and persistence as the Three R's. The Board had early appointed two inspectors to assist in organising the schools and to report to the Board as to their efficiency ; and in the reports of these officials we get some interesting glimpses of the conditions of school life in those early days. "The majority of the children," said one of the inspectors, "are of a lower social grade than those attending voluntary schools. In one school in an extremely low locality several scholars are well known juvenile thieves who have been forced into the school by the action of the Educational Committee. In many other instances a large proportion of the scholars are of the 'street Arab' class, who are now for the first time brought under the influence of discipline and good example."

There are teachers still in the service of the Board whose recollection goes back to the earliest years of the Board's work, and some of them can relate curious experiences of their first days in the new schools. The headmaster of one of the best schools in the north of London recalls the scene at the opening of his first school as a perfect pandemonium. He had rather unwisely prepared for his pupils by having the ink-wells in the school desks filled ; before the end of the morning all the boys had emptied their ink-wells, most of them down the necks of other boys. But the sight which remains most vividly impressed on his memory is that of one of his pupils belabouring his fellows with a

wooden leg—his own—which he was wont to adjust and unfasten as the exigencies of life demanded.

At Orange Street in the Borough, a spot which Mr Charles Booth's poverty map still indicates as one of the poorest in London, the children are spoken of by one who laboured amongst them thirty years ago as having been almost inconceivably rough and degraded. The general poverty and the squalor of many of the homes were worse than anything with which teachers now come in contact. Here, as at many other schools, the teachers were impelled by the obvious needs of their scholars to many philanthropic efforts that lay outside their official duties. After school was over the headmistress and her assistants devoted many hours to making garments for the poorest children. They carried out what was then the very bold scheme—for this was before the great country holiday funds had been thought of—of sending parties of children to Brighton for a summer holiday. The children had to be despatched clean as well as neatly clad, and as baths did not enter into the economy of many of their lives, these instruments of civilisation were provided on the school premises; but they were regarded with such aversion that in some cases the cleansing process could only be accomplished *vi et armis*. The people of the neighbourhood were not only poor but astonishingly ignorant, and the headmistress, when her kindly disposition became known, was in great demand as a letter writer. By these and other services she and her teachers quite broke down the feeling of hostility with which the school was at first regarded, and it became the chief and for a time almost the only civilising and humanising agency in the neighbourhood.

Of course it was found impossible in the majority of schools to carry out anything like the liberal curriculum of study which the Board had laid down. Reading, writing, arithmetic, scripture and singing were the only subjects attempted in many schools; others added geography,

grammar, drawing and physical exercise. "The instruction in geography and grammar," said one of the Board inspectors, "is, except in a few instances, very elementary, but the results are quite as good as could reasonably be expected. When we come, however, to the ordinary subjects, the results would be extremely discouraging if the circumstances of the schools were not taken into consideration. It would be altogether unjust to compare the Board Schools with long-established voluntary schools, for both in point of teaching staff and the educational status of the pupils the former are placed at immense disadvantage. . . . By far the larger proportion of pupils have either had no previous instruction whatever, or have attended school so irregularly as not to have benefited at all by it. Of all the children over seven years of age whose names are on the school register, no fewer than 53 per cent. are below Standard I. In some schools this percentage is considerably higher, reaching in one instance over 80 per cent. It is impossible that this fearful amount of ignorance can be eradicated for years to come. The education of such children has to be commenced at the very beginning; and it should not be forgotten that the gap between absolute ignorance and Standard I. is much wider and deeper than that between Standards I. and II."

The investigations of the other inspector led to a similar result. In his district no fewer than 51.6 per cent. of the children were below any Standard, 26.5 per cent. were in Standard I., and only 2 per cent. in Standards IV., V. and VI. put together. "Below any Standard," the inspector explains, "means that the children could not read very simple sentences or write very simple words, or perform the simplest operation in addition or subtraction of numbers. In more than half the cases it means more: it means that they could not read or write the alphabet or add five and six together." The inspector examined the children in fifty departments in reading, writing and arithmetic, and found

that of the 6358 examined only 4 were competent to pass the Sixth Standard in reading, three in arithmetic, and one solitary girl in writing; while at the other end of the scale there were 3444 children who could not pass the First Standard in reading, 2817 who could not pass in writing, and 3589 who could not pass in arithmetic.

It should be remembered that these figures refer to children of from seven to thirteen years of age, not to "infants." In the Board School of to-day the average age of the First Standard would be seven years, of the Second eight, and so on, moving up a Standard a year until the Seventh is reached at the age of thirteen. In the earliest schools there were only six Standards; Standard Seven was a dizzy intellectual height which no one in those days even attempted to reach. No wonder the inspector who made these investigations came to the same conclusion as his colleague, that the state of ignorance revealed was "truly deplorable."

Ignorance, however, is a curable disease. And the mere fact that there was in the London Board Schools an exceptionally large amount of it was only what might have been expected. Given a willingness to learn, the task of dispelling the ignorance need not have been specially arduous, and the teachers might have wrought under the constant stimulus which the steady progress of their pupils would afford. But, unfortunately, it was just that willingness to learn which, in a great number of cases, was conspicuously lacking. And it was that fact—inevitable as it was from the antecedents of the children and the attitude of their parents—which made the teachers' work so extremely hard. For any excuse or none the children absented themselves from school, and when they came they were unpunctual. In 1873 no less than 31 per cent. of the children on the rolls were always absent, or including those who came so late as to be marked absent, 33 per cent. Commenting upon this one of the inspectors remarks: "This

(percentage) is very high, much higher than might reasonably be anticipated, and it is an evil against which the very best teachers cannot hope to contend. It disheartens the teacher, it paralyses his efforts, it retards the general progress and tends to destroy the organisation and discipline of the school. Over and over again I hear the remark, 'If I could but get them to attend regularly, I could do something with them, but it is this constant absence that thwarts me.'

Another element of difficulty from which later Boards have been free was the inadequate supply of competent teachers. Neither trained teachers nor intelligent and promising candidates were to be obtained in anything like sufficient numbers; so that the Board had perforce to employ many untrained and comparatively inefficient teachers, while a more competent race was in process of evolution. The lamentable condition of the teaching profession in England at that time is pretty clearly shown by the type of candidates who presented themselves at the first examinations for pupil teacherships under the London School Board. The inspectors who examined them comment somewhat severely on the fact that many of them could not have passed the Third Standard with credit. They quote for the delectation of the Board some remarkable examples of spelling from the examination papers, and such items of geographical information as these: "The Isle of White is in the Wash," "Hastings is in Sunderland," "Liverpool is in Manchester," "The Thames rises in the German Ocean and flows into the Cotswold Hills." The head teachers who allowed such children to present themselves as candidates for teacherships must have thought, one would suppose, somewhat meanly of their profession. Such conditions were, however, but the natural outcome of the preposterous monitorial system under which the child who just knew long division was considered quite competent to teach the child who only knew addition and subtraction.

A special committee, which the Board appointed in April 1872 to consider the question of the supply of trained teachers, came to the not very exhilarating conclusion that the existing training colleges could not supply more than about a third of the teachers who would be needed within the next two or three years. But as the Board had not power to spend money on training colleges, it could do little to mend this unsatisfactory state of affairs. It could only hope, by offering fairly liberal salaries, as teachers' salaries go, to attract a better type of candidate to the ranks of the pupil teachers.

From what we have seen of the conditions of early School Board work it may be supposed that to those who surveyed the situation in 1873 or 1874 there were not wanting elements of discouragement. But it was in no spirit of doubt or dismay that the second School Board began to build on the foundations its predecessor had laid. Some illusions had been dispelled, the task to be accomplished had turned out to be a bigger one than was at first supposed; but the conditions of the problem were now thoroughly well known, the ground was fully marked out, and there was every reason to believe that the work already done, however barren of result it might yet appear, was on the right lines. Sir Charles Reed, the chairman of the second Board, in his annual address for 1874, showed that, although the actual results of the teaching might seem disappointing, a vast and varied work had already been done. "Of the school work and its results," he said, "I do not propose to say one word. It is too soon altogether for us to speak upon the question. Tens of thousands of the children in our schools are, I regret to say, grossly ignorant and utterly uninstructed, and the only thing we can do is to look to their cleanliness, and give them habits of order, and promote their regularity of attendance, and then leave the question of results, quite certain that with good schools and most efficient teachers, all schools being now full, the results are sure to follow."



The story of the next few years fully justified this confidence. Every year saw an improvement in the regularity and orderliness of the children, and in the attitude of parents towards the schools. The work of the infant schools soon began to tell. Children who came up to the senior schools after a year or two of the gentle discipline of the infants' departments were naturally far better material to work upon than those whose only preparatory school had been the city streets and alleys; every year the proportion of the former to the latter increased, and the work became correspondingly pleasanter and more effective. But the best way to measure the progress made since those earliest years will be to take stock of the ordinary Board School of the present day; and this will be our next concern.

## CHAPTER IV

### THE ORDINARY BOARD SCHOOL OF TO-DAY

SINCE the early days of which we spoke in the last chapter the School Board system has steadily grown in extent and in popular favour. New schools have been opened every year, and to-day the Board School is one of the most familiar features of London street architecture. At Lady Day 1903 there were 509 Board Schools, affording accommodation for 572,649 children; and the average number on the roll for the preceding twelve months was 549,677. In other words, half the elementary schools of London are Board Schools, and five-sevenths of the elementary school children are educated in these schools. The schools are generally to be found a little apart from the main thoroughfares in the very midst of the population they are intended to serve, and in thickly populated working-class districts there are often two or three Board Schools almost within a stone's throw of each other.

The buildings all have a strong family likeness; they are substantial structures of red and yellowish brick, plain but not unpleasing in appearance, generally three stories high, with abundance of windows, and often with quaint curved gables which add a touch of picturesqueness. A considerable space of asphalted playground adjoins each school, except in a few cases where the site was too restricted to allow of this, and the playground has been relegated to the roof. But there have been advances in school planning, as in other matters, since the first Board Schools were built, and

the most recently erected buildings show as decided an improvement on the schools of 1872-75 as did those on the then customary type of elementary school.

It is now an invariable rule that every class has its separate classroom, and in all the newer schools there is a central hall in which the whole school assembles daily for prayers and in which physical exercises are carried on. A hall was not supplied originally to the older schools, but it has proved to be so valuable a feature that in many cases it has since been added. The interior of a Board School nearly always has a bright, cheerful appearance. The rooms are lofty, well ventilated and—with an occasional exception in the older buildings—well lighted. The clean, distempered walls are adorned with pictures, not merely maps and diagrams, but good engravings and etchings, and occasionally original paintings. These latter are of the nature of collective prizes given by the Board to a school or class that has specially distinguished itself; herein the Board displays a quite serpentine wisdom which ratepayers ought to appreciate, for the pictures remain the property of the Board, and having served their purpose of encouraging and rewarding one set of children, they can be devoted to the same end elsewhere.

A first glance round the school hall gives us a hint of the new spirit that has come over our public elementary schools and the broader outlook which will not confine the education of children within the limits of a syllabus. Here is the Honour Board recording the names of pupils who have won scholarships, and thus serving to stimulate ambition and foster a healthy public spirit. Perhaps, too, there may be a cup or shield recording the prowess of the scholars on the football field or at the swimming bath. Here is a bookcase containing the school library, or such part of it as is not in circulation, and the books, one is pleased to notice, are not all of the so-called "improving" type. The school

museum also attracts attention; the nucleus has been supplied by the School Board, but teachers and scholars have from time to time added their gifts.

If we watch the children at work, or entering or leaving school, we can hardly fail to be impressed by their orderly and cheerful demeanour. Efficiency, order and cheerfulness are the dominant notes of the London Board School wherever it happens to be built, and if we are visiting a school in a slum district, the surrounding squalor only throws these qualities into brighter relief.

But while there are many characteristics that are common to all London Board Schools, it must not be supposed that every school is exactly like every other. In the matter of organisation the Board has laid down no absolutely hard and fast rule, but has always been ready to try an experiment which gave promise of success, and to adapt its arrangements to suit special circumstances. So that while we find the great majority of the schools organised in three departments—boys', girls' and infants'—forming together a school of about 1000 children, we find also a fair number of mixed schools for boys and girls together, as well as some which are organised in senior and junior departments. In regard to the curriculum of study and the methods of teaching, a good deal of latitude is allowed to the teachers, though they must, of course, comply with the requirements of the Board of Education as well as with any general instructions of the School Board.

But the most striking difference between one school and another lies in the different social position of the children. There are schools where half the children are habitually underfed, where clothes are in rags and toes peep through the broken boots, where the home conditions of only a small minority are decent and healthful, and where the bulk of the boys and many of the girls have to devote nearly all the hours that should be

spent in play to an effort to add a few shillings to the family income. But poor as they are, the children are personally clean, for cleanliness is one of the cardinal virtues of the Board School which have been impressed upon successive generations of scholars. I was told by a teacher in a very poor school in Lambeth that the children of the neighbourhood are both poorer and cleaner than were the children of twenty years ago. These bad social conditions react in a very marked degree upon the educational work of the school. At the Lambeth school just referred to there are boys of twelve and thirteen in Standards I. and II. These children will sometimes fall asleep at their desks from sheer weariness, or they will gaze listlessly into vacancy while an interesting story is told, the ill-nourished brain unable apparently to take in what is heard. In this school nine-tenths of the scholars never reach Standard VI.

But what a contrast we may find if we visit a school, say, at Hampstead or Highgate. It is a Board School still; there is a similar building with similar furniture and pictures, but the children seem to belong to another race. Here every child is comfortably clad and well fed; nearly all are strong of limb, with the fresh, clear skin, bright, laughing eyes and eager, alert manner which proclaim them the children of happy English homes. As far as appearance is concerned, the bulk of the scholars are scarcely to be distinguished from the pupils of a secondary school.

The idea, once widely held, that School Boards exist exclusively for the poorest classes has long been given up by the people of London. The prejudice and pseudo-gentility which in pre-School Board days kept alive for so long the grossly inefficient private elementary schools, and which afterwards prevented many from availing themselves of the rate-supported Board Schools, have long given way to a more enlightened view of the functions of the State; and many thousands

of middle-class parents—clerks, tradesmen and prosperous mechanics—have wisely availed themselves for their children of what they recognise to be the best education within their reach. The first School Board, which with all its virtues was a more timorous body than some of its successors, was inclined to deprecate this use of its schools, though it had no power to prevent it. But later Boards, taking a more liberal view of their responsibilities, have tried to make the Board Schools, in a broad and general sense, the popular schools, and have sought to adapt them to the needs of all classes needing elementary education, including those who were able and willing to keep their children at school a little longer than the law required. Hence came the organisation of Higher Grade and Higher Elementary Schools, which will be more fully considered in a future chapter. It will be obvious that in schools attended by the more happily circumstanced children better results may be expected and a wider curriculum may be attempted than in the schools of the very poor.

There are certain subjects which are taught in all Board Schools, though the time given and the standard aimed at may vary a good deal in different schools. Reading, writing, arithmetic, scripture, drawing, class-singing, English (grammar, composition and recitation), geography, elementary science (with the younger children this takes the form of object lessons), history, needlework (for girls), and physical exercises are now taught in all schools. In addition to these compulsory subjects, the head teacher in each school makes a selection from a large number of optional subjects. Of these the most popular are French and algebra. Latin and German are taught in very few schools; but animal physiology, book-keeping, botany, chemistry, physics, mensuration, Euclid, mechanics, hygiene and shorthand have each some thousands of students among the children in our Board Schools. Then, in addition to

the literary side of the work, very nearly all the boys and girls in the upper classes attend special centres for manual training and domestic economy respectively.

But the mere enumeration of the subjects taught gives but the faintest idea of the character of the education given in the modern Board School. There are of course among the 12,000 teachers of the London School Board various degrees of intelligence and enthusiasm. But if the schools I have seen and the teachers with whom I have conversed may be taken as typical of the whole, it may fairly be said that the methods adopted are generally admirable, and in the best schools the spirit in which the work is done is more admirable still. It is real education—the drawing out of the child's intelligence—not mere cramming, for which the modern Board School stands. The old wooden ways of teaching—the arithmetic by rule of thumb, the history that consists in learning strings of dates, the geography lesson that is a mere matter of memorising—all these have passed into the limbo of things superannuated and discredited. Everywhere the aim seems to be to make the lessons as attractive as possible, to draw out the intelligence and develop the powers of the children rather than to cram them with facts, to stimulate curiosity and provide pleasant occupation for the young hands and brains. Teachers are at last beginning to realise the truth for which Herbert Spencer contended forty years ago that the methods of learning which are most pleasant to the child are generally the most natural and therefore the most really educational.

Let us glance at a few typical lessons. Here is a class of little boys listening to the story of Charlie and Harry who went fishing; the plot turns upon the number of fishes caught, for it is a lesson in mental arithmetic, and the children are eagerly answering questions as the story proceeds. Not waiting for the *dénouement*, which will be concerned with the consump-

tion of those fishes (how many for each person?) at the family dinner-party, we pass into another room where a geography lesson is in progress; at the table in front of the class two boys are making mountains of sand and rivers of chalk and water. In another room all eyes are fixed on a hydrogen-filled balloon, which is sailing slowly towards the ceiling; this is a science lesson, and the properties of hydrogen are being demonstrated. A class of older children will make simple researches on their own account in chemistry and physics, many schools having a classroom specially fitted up for this purpose. Here is a class of little girls who seem deeply interested in a lump of common table salt; this is an object lesson, and when it is over they will not only tell their teacher that salt is granulous, and explain what "granulous" means, but will answer questions about salt mines and the manufacture of salt-glazed pottery—a subject not so remote from their lives as might appear, since many of their parents are employed at neighbouring pottery works. Entering a classroom from which the light has been shut out by means of blinds, we find that the magic lantern is being used in a geography lesson; pictures of Government House at Wellington, of a snow-clad mountain and a Maori warrior succeed one another on the screen, the teacher giving appropriate explanations—a pleasant and effective way of conveying information about New Zealand. In another room a lesson in composition is going on; this may seem very unexciting work, but the teacher has given actuality and interest to it by a simple device. The letters which the boys are writing are real letters to real boys in a school in the country; presently they will be posted, and answers will be received, which will not only interest the boys in country life, but will help to maintain a healthy human relationship.

Nor is it only in the schools themselves that Board School classes work. You may meet a class in a London park, at Westminster Abbey, the British



Museum or the Tower of London. There is a school in Walworth where a visit to some place of interest in London or a slow drive by brake through the London streets is a weekly feature of the work for the elder boys. These excursions are not mere holiday jaunts; they are strictly educational, and are allowed by the Board of Education to count as time spent in school; on their return the children invariably write of what they have seen and heard. The generality of teachers might with advantage follow the example in this matter of the more progressive of their number. Such classes are always welcomed by the custodians of places of educational interest. It was a class from the Walworth school just mentioned which the late Dean Bradley encountered in the Abbey a year or two ago. He expressed himself delighted that teachers were at last beginning to teach history in this sensible way. "I am thankful," he said, "that I have lived to see it"; and he took the boys into the Jerusalem Chamber and talked to them in his charming way about the associations of the place.

Drawing is one of the subjects in which many of the schools have made great strides of late years. The old method was to make outline drawings in pencil, striving to reproduce the copy with the utmost exactness. Now they put paint brushes and coloured chalks into the hands of even the youngest children, and encourage them to try and represent form and colour. Free-arm drawings are made with chalk on mill board or toned paper, the children working at easels and judging their work at arm's length, thus acquiring some freedom of draughtsmanship and sense of form and proportion. In some schools the ambi-dextrous method is being tried with good results. Many, even of the younger children, show considerable aptitude in brush work, producing creditable wash drawings without any preliminary pencilling, while the older children will paint direct from nature, and make original designs for wall papers,

cretonnes, tiles, etc., based on the natural forms they have been studying. In some schools stencilling has been tried, the stencils being cut by the pupils themselves; in others good progress is being made in modelling in clay.

Every year since 1877 an exhibition of work done by pupils in the schools has been organised by the School Board, and the art work shown on the last two or three occasions has indicated a much more widely diffused artistic capacity among the children of the working classes than the observer of modern commercial tendencies might be prepared to expect. That a few clever boys or girls should produce drawings or paintings of great merit would not be particularly noteworthy; the significant thing is the demonstration of what whole classes, under proper instruction, can accomplish. Taken in conjunction with the work done at the manual training centres, the work of some of the art classes seems to point to the existence amongst us of the raw material out of which, if modern commercial conditions were more favourable, might be evolved a race of craftsmen capable of reviving the old artistic crafts of England. The pity is that the boy who at school has proved himself most apt with chisel and plane, pencil and brush, may, after he leaves school, be set to feed a machine producing so-called objects of art by the gross, and demanding from the workman neither thought nor skill.

But however great or small may be the direct practical use of such studies to the scholars in their after lives there can be no doubt of their refining and civilising influence. The same may be said of the vocal music which is a compulsory subject in every school. The part singing, taught on the Tonic Sol-fa system, is in many of the schools very sweet and beautiful. There are few more interesting concerts given in London than those held from time to time at the Crystal Palace, when from 4000 to 5000 scholars from the Board Schools

take part. Several schools support a string band, and at the Crystal Palace concerts it has been found possible to get together an orchestra of 250 instrumentalists composed almost entirely of pupils in the schools. A piano is now to be found in most schools, but the statement that pianoforte playing is one of the subjects of instruction in Board Schools is one of those little bits of School Board mythology which sometimes become current at election times. The instruments are used to accompany singing and physical exercises.

There is one lesson every week which, with the bulk of the boys, is probably the most popular of the whole school curriculum. This is the manual training, which takes place not in the schoolrooms but in specially built workshops in the playgrounds of certain schools which serve as centres for several neighbouring schools. As a general rule all the teaching in a Board School is given by the ordinary teachers, who have to be persons of varied attainments, but for manual training it is necessary to employ special instructors. And this fact has undoubtedly been a cause of weakness; it is not easy to get skilled artisans who can teach successfully, or teachers of ordinary subjects who are also expert mechanics. But this difficulty is being gradually overcome, and the Board has now a number of very able teachers in this as in other departments of its work.

The first step in the direction of systematic manual training was taken in 1885, when the school-keeper at one of the schools, who had been a carpenter, started an experimental class under the direction of the headmaster. The boys were reported to be much interested, and the Board proposed to start several additional classes. But the Local Government Board auditor surcharged the payments, and for a time further developments were arrested. The inclusion, however, of manual training as an elementary school subject in the Education Department's Code removed the legal difficulty, and the general introduction of the subject

into Board Schools was advocated both by those who saw in it a valuable means of hand and eye training, and by others who hoped to keep School Board boys "in their place" by giving their thoughts a turn in the direction of handicrafts.

At two or three of the manual training centres metal work is taught, but woodwork is the subject taken at the great majority. The work is carried out on strictly educational lines. Whatever may have been the ideas of some of the advocates of this teaching, the teacher's object is not to make carpenters or cabinet-makers, but to give a training to hand and eye which shall be useful to the boy whatever calling he may follow. Workshop methods and rule of thumb are ignored, and everything is done on scientific principles. The boy makes working drawings of the model he is to copy, and his bench work must correspond with the drawing in every particular. He proceeds, as in other studies, from the simple to the more difficult, each successive study introducing some new tool manipulation. The normal boy delights in handling tools and in making things; at the manual training centre he does both and is happy. He is allowed to devote his energies to the making of objects of actual utility, in order that his interest in the work may be enhanced; but the educational purpose is never lost sight of, the completed article being the incidental result, the manual dexterity the main object.

Corresponding to the manual training centres on the boys' side the girls have their cookery, laundry and housewifery centres. These centres alone would be a sufficient justification, if any were needed, of the presence of women on the London School Board. It is scarcely possible that so complete and thoroughly practical a system of domestic training as these classes afford could have been perfected, if ever it had been begun, by a Board composed exclusively of men. The late Miss Davenport Hill worked hard to establish and systematise

this very useful side of School Board work, and during recent years Mrs Ruth Homan has done very much to foster and develop the work.

As at the manual training centres there is no trade object in view in the domestic economy classes. Let no lady reader lay the flattering unction to her soul that these classes are calculated to solve the domestic



A COOKERY LESSON (MONTEN STREET CENTRE).

servant problem. Only a few of the girls who attend them will go to service, but very many—let us hope—will be better wives and mothers for having graduated in the School Board academy of domestic science. Now and again a superfine young lady, who thinks it *infra dig.* to stand over a wash-tub or blacklead a grate, would gladly escape the classes if she could, but for the most part they are immensely popular both with the girls and their parents. Many letters are received by the teachers gratefully testifying to the increased use-

fulness of the children, and often a little girl has proudly said to her teacher, "Mother says I can cook better than she can"—a statement which does not necessarily imply a prodigious degree of culinary skill, but which at least indicates the satisfaction of both mother and child.

In all the teaching theory and practice go hand in hand. The girls sit at their desks taking notes and answering questions, while the teacher explains the principles to be observed in cooking the food, and then proceeds to demonstrate before them the application of those principles to the particular dishes in hand. Then the girls leave their desks, and become real cooks for the time being, preparing and cooking the same dishes themselves. Economy and thrift in buying and preparing the food are inculcated not because the girls belong to the working classes, but because economy and thrift are sound principles in the management of any house. The food cooked often forms the teachers' dinner, or it may be sold in penny and halfpenny portions to the little cooks themselves. There is thus no waste of material, and the fears once entertained by some that the classes would prove very costly have not been realised. It is characteristic of the practical and adaptable character of School Board methods that one or two cookery classes for boys are held in the neighbourhood of the docks, where it is expected that many will follow a seafaring life.

In the laundry classes similar principles of teaching obtain. The little washerwomen can not only produce the whitest of linen, but they can explain why you put blue in the water, what are the virtues of soda, and so on.

The housewifery centre is practically a four-roomed house, consisting of a bedroom, sitting-room and kitchen, and a lecture-room. Sometimes it has been specially built for the purpose; sometimes it is a dwelling-house or part of one which has been adapted. The rooms are

furnished and fitted much as a working man's home might be, and here girls who have already gone through the cookery and laundry classes learn, and as far as may be practise, an astonishing variety of useful household lore. Here the girls practise cooking without the appliances of the cookery school, using only such utensils as might be found in a working man's kitchen.



A CLASS IN LAUNDRY WORK (MONTEM STREET CENTRE).

The principles of lighting, ventilation, drainage and water supply; how to select a house and furnish it; how to lay a table, make a bed, dust a sitting-room; how to make furniture polish and use it; how to apportion the weekly income; the planning of meals at a stated cost, and buying the food (the girls go marketing and drive shrewd bargains with the generally sympathetic tradespeople); suitable clothing for men, women and children; the care of a baby (sometimes a real baby "assists" at the demonstrations) and the principles of

home nursing: these are only some of the subjects studied in the course of a year and a half at the housewifery centre. It is difficult for the mere man to appreciate what all this work means. To him it may seem strange that there can be a right and a wrong way of cleaning a grate or hearthstoning a window sill, though he can more easily conceive of an ill-made bed or a badly cooked chop. It appears, however, that there are pitfalls in all these matters, wherefore is it comforting to know that some thousands of girls annually leave the Board Schools who are expert practitioners in all kinds of useful domestic arts.

As a rule, all the girls in the upper standards spend one half-day a week at the cookery, laundry or housewifery centre. But girls who have passed the age of exemption from compulsory attendance, and whose parents are willing to keep them a little longer at school, are now allowed to spend half the school time at the domestic economy centre.

All these practical occupations undoubtedly make for the brightening and humanising of school life, and have had no small influence in popularising the Board Schools. For the bulk of the children school is anything but an unhappy place. Shakespeare's "whining schoolboy, creeping like snail unwillingly to school," is no description of the average Board School boy. Mothers are sometimes distressed at the eagerness of the children to go to school even when suffering from slight indisposition, and many children are glad when the holidays are over, not because they are phenomenally studious, but because the occupations of the school are pleasanter than those their homes afford.

All this, of course, implies no laxity of discipline at school. Quite the contrary. The discipline to-day in Board Schools is probably better than ever it was, but it is maintained by milder means. True, a cane is still supplied to every department, but its use is becoming



more and more infrequent; in some girls' schools I believe it has become a mere idle emblem of authority. The tendency is to increase rewards and diminish punishments. The rules of the Board with regard to punishment have varied somewhat from time to time. For many years the rule was, that only head teachers should inflict corporal punishment. But this was an impracticable rule in view of the conditions of Board School work in the seventies and the eighties, and it is certain that, while it obtained, there was more corporal punishment inflicted by assistants—though more or less surreptitiously—than there is to-day. The present rules allow the assistants to punish, provided they have the written authority of the head teacher and enter particulars of every case in a book kept for the purpose. It is naturally difficult to know to what extent these rules are observed; probably the great bulk of the teachers accept them loyally, though some do not. But it is pretty certain that no case of excessive or vindictive punishment could take place in a Board School without the teacher being quickly called to account, and even the teacher who inflicts irregular though well-deserved punishment does so at considerable risk to himself.

But after all the great safeguard against abuse of authority on the part of the teacher lies in the growth of sympathy and kindly feeling between teacher and scholar. A boy's praise of his teacher is not generally couched in superlatives. The late Archbishop Temple used to quote with grim satisfaction the Rugby boy's description of him as "a beast, but a just beast," and the Board School teachers who are spoken of by their pupils—and many of them are—as "a decent sort of chap" and "not half a bad sort," may well feel that they have not lived in vain. Several things have combined of late years to make possible this more kindly and sympathetic relationship. The greater friendliness of parents towards the schools has been reflected in

their children. No longer are there, as in the early days of the Board, large numbers of wild and undisciplined children who have been swept into the schools much against their will by the operation of the compulsory bye-laws and are beginning their schooling at the age of ten or twelve. The children nowadays are caught young; most of them pass through the infant schools, and have learnt by the time they reach the graded schools to regard coming to school as an inevitable and not unpleasing part of their daily lives.

Another great reason for the improvements in Board Schools both from an educational and a humanitarian standpoint has been the abolition of the system of payment by results. When every child was a potential earner of so many shillings for his teacher, it is not surprising if the teacher's main concern was to see that the child earned those shillings. The grant to the school was dependent chiefly upon the number of children who satisfied the Government inspector at the annual examination, and the Board, to make matters worse, made the teacher's salary dependent upon the grant earned by his school. The teacher was not paid to educate but to cram; therefore he crammed.

In the bad old times the inspector was an ogre whose approaching visit cast a gloom over the school for many weeks before he arrived. To-day he is the familiar friend who drops in at any time unexpectedly, and is always welcomed, especially by the children, who are pleased to show a visitor what they can do. It is true the teacher's reputation, and therefore indirectly his salary, still depends in great measure on the Government inspector's report. But the inspector is now less on the look-out for correct answers to two or three sums on a particular day than for evidence of a sound system of education which makes for the happiness and the moral and intellectual well-being of the children. Naturally, therefore, the teacher aims at the

same object. He now receives a fixed salary from the School Board, and is free to give the best that is in him to the work of improving his school or his class, as the case may be. He can look upon the boys and girls not as spelling and calculating machines, which must be kept screwed up to the requisite tension, but as fascinating little human problems, each with a heart as well as a head, and gladly responding to the human sympathy which, wherever it is present, turns toil to pleasure and makes the day's task light.

## CHAPTER V

### INFANT SCHOOLS

IN the earliest years of the School Board the infant schools were the bright spot in the system. While thousands of rough boys and girls, who had been growing up in utter ignorance of nearly everything a child should know, were receiving in the newly opened Board Schools their first painful lessons in reading, writing and ciphering, and in the still more essential matters of cleanliness, order and obedience, their little brothers and sisters were learning the same lessons in the infants' departments of the schools, but under how much happier and easier conditions! The wildest of Hooligans was not very terrible at five years of age. And it was found that the little children, even those from the roughest of homes, were easily amenable to discipline and took to the school life readily and happily. The Board inspectors frequently referred to the admirable work of the infant schools, and the contrast they presented in these early years with the schools for the elder scholars. "It is quite a treat," said one of the inspectors, writing in 1873, "to go into one of these schools and observe to how great an extent it is possible to make instruction pleasant, and how easy it is to gain the affections of children by a kind and patient manner."

The methods adopted in infant schools in the earliest days of the Board and their subsequent development were influenced in no small degree by the

recommendations of the special committee appointed by the first Board to consider the curriculum to be adopted in the schools. The committee recommended that, in addition to reading, writing and arithmetic, the work of the infant schools should include "object lessons of a simple character, with some exercises of the hands and eyes, as is given by the 'Kindergarten' system." In accepting this recommendation the Board gave its sanction to a principle of education which, though not new, had up to that time gained little recognition in England, but which was of immense importance to the future development of infant school work.

In fact the history of infant schools under the London School Board has been in great measure the history of the development of the Kindergarten idea. At first Kindergarten was very little understood. Having given their reading, writing and arithmetic lessons in the old mechanical way, teachers would set the children building with cubes of wood or threading beads as a pleasant relief from the more arduous lessons; and these occupations they would call "Kindergarten." It was only by degrees that the true conception of Kindergarten as a principle of education, which should govern the whole life of the school, not a mere addendum to the ordinary work, gained general recognition.

Naturally the Kindergarten or Frœbelian idea of teaching has been worked out with varying degrees of thoroughness in different schools and with many modifications of detail. Consequently we find in the infant schools of to-day much greater diversity of method than in the schools for older children. And it is difficult to point to any one school as typical of the whole or even of a large number, or to any detailed methods of teaching as being absolutely the best. Many schools which differ even in important details may be conducted with equal intelligence and yield equally good results. It is possible, however, to

indicate certain general principles which underlie a very great deal of infant school work in London, and to show how these principles are carried out by some of the most progressive and intelligent teachers.

A point which the most casual observer of infant schools could hardly fail to notice is that the utmost care is taken to make learning easy and pleasant for the children. They are led gently along a primrose path to the goal which former generations of infants only reached after much stumbling over stony ways. Often the lessons seem more like an exciting game, which the children would not lose on any account. And this principle applies not only to subjects that might be supposed to be more or less recreative in character, such as object lessons and singing, but to all the work of the school.

Take, for instance, the matter which most people will regard as the very first in a child's school education, though it is not necessarily so, the learning of the alphabet. How shall a baby of three or four years be taught his letters? There are more ways than one. In some schools a "Living Letter Alphabet," devised by one of the Board's headmistresses, Mrs Walker of Fleet Road School, is used. The children form themselves into living illustrations of the letters; they are provided with boxes containing straight and curved strips of coloured card, and out of these they construct each letter for themselves, afterwards drawing it on their slates: the letters are compared with familiar objects, and a verse is said or sung about each. Thus the reading lesson becomes at once a calisthenic exercise, a Kindergarten game, a drawing exercise, a lesson in form, number and colour, and a conversation lesson introducing new words and ideas; and all the time the children are interested, busy and happy.

Or take a different system. Let us go to Montem Street School, Tollington Park, where the headmistress, Mrs Legg, is a lady of rare insight and sympathy, as

well as of great experience; we will take our place in the "babies' room," and observe the very first steps by which tiny children of three or four years are taught to read. The teacher begins by drawing on the black-board with a few bold lines a rough presentment of the domestic cat—an invaluable animal in the infant school; it turns up in lesson after lesson. Then she



LEARNING THE ALPHABET (FLEET ROAD SCHOOL).

and the children talk about cats for a while, and perhaps the children make their queer little attempts to draw a cat.

"Now," says the teacher, "every little boy and girl has a name. What is yours—and yours? Well, let us write the cat's name"; and she proceeds to write "c a t" under the picture on the board. "These," she says, "are called letters; how many are there? (here comes the first lesson in number). By-and-by I will tell you their names, but not now. Look at this first letter and

see if you can find one like it in your little boxes." Every child has a small box containing the three letters and some of them pick out the wrong letter. They have not yet the sense of form which enables them to distinguish between one letter and another. When at last all have found "c," the teacher tells them to draw it on their slates. The outlines produced may not appeal to the onlooker as particularly like the letter "c." But never mind; the little hands have been learning to hold a pencil; the children have been observing the form of the letter, and to-morrow they will pick it out without mistake; and all has been done in a pleasant way. The next day, perhaps, the teacher tells the name of the letter that has been learned; then "a" and "t" are learned in a similar way.

Then one morning the letter "m" is added to the three in the children's boxes, and they are asked to pick out the new letter. The word "mat" is then taught, the children are shown a mat, it is drawn on the black-board, and they draw it on their slates. Perhaps "h" is the next letter to be added, and the word "hat" is placed before the children. It is now pointed out that only the first letter differs in the three words, and the children are taught to recognise "at" as a kind of grammalogue. A syllable once learned is not broken up again, but used in building new words. Thus by the time the whole alphabet is known a considerable number of words and syllables are known also. All this time the small letters only are put before the children, that they may not be confused with differing forms. The capital letters are learned afterwards almost unconsciously from the reading primers.

Another interesting method of teaching reading, which has acquired considerable vogue in the infant schools, is that known as the Nellie Dale system. By this system, reading is at first taught phonetically; the child learns the sounds, not the names, of the letters, and at once combines them to form syllables.



Different colours are used in the primers and when writing on the blackboard to distinguish different sound values of the same letters. Children taught on this system are able to read with considerable fluency before they learn the names of the letters.

But whatever the system adopted, the cardinal principle of making the lesson pleasant and bright is never lost sight of. And it is the same with the arithmetic lessons, which might so easily become tedious and irksome to little children. The old-fashioned ball frame is still very generally used, but at Montem Street the big frame standing in front of the class is supplemented by little frames which all the children manipulate for themselves, and in very many schools wood or cardboard counters are used. By calling the balls or other counters children or soldiers, and inventing little stories and problems about them, the teacher can make the arithmetic lesson as fascinating to the little people as a Kindergarten game. And here we see two other important infant school principles exemplified, that of keeping the children's hands continually busy as well as their brains, and that of proceeding from the concrete to the abstract.

The principle of training the child to observe and investigate for himself—a principle which should apply to all education—is kept well to the front in the best infant schools. Obviously children could have no more fitting objects on which to exercise their powers of observation than the works of Nature, and so we find that in many schools nature study takes a very prominent place, in fact it is sometimes the basis on which the whole curriculum of the school is founded. There are schools even in the poorest and most thickly populated districts where the classrooms are continually gay with flowers, the gifts of children as well as teachers; where potatoes, turnips, beans and other vegetables and plants are grown in flower pots and watched and tended from day to day; and where birds,



A CLASS FROM CLYDE STREET SCHOOL SKETCHING IN DEPTFORD PARK.

frogs, snails, silk-worms and such small deer reside permanently in the classrooms, while larger game—such as rabbits and cats—visit the abodes of learning when their services are specially wanted. By arrangement with the County Council boxes of cuttings can be obtained from the parks by teachers who ask for them, but the teachers and children themselves collect a great quantity of the material required for the nature study, and parents are often very sympathetic and helpful. The children are trained to observe as much as possible outside the school as well as in the classroom. Some teachers take their classes into the parks and open spaces—always with a definite object. The leaves and flowers shown in the classroom are not examined as complete and isolated objects, but are shown as beautiful and necessary parts of the plant or tree to which they belong. The study of the acorn, for instance, is not complete till the children have carefully observed an oak tree.

This nature study may be regarded as a preparation for scientific studies in later years, but it is not coldly scientific in spirit. Its tendency is to inculcate sympathy with all living things and a reverent appreciation of the beauty and harmony of nature; and thus it provides a moral as well as an intellectual training. It might be thought that such study would be impossible in most of our London Board Schools, and certainly it is not carried on without difficulty. But to the seeing eye nature has wonders and beauties to reveal even amidst the bricks and mortar of the city. The London child whose profound ignorance of all that pertains to country life has given point to so many anecdotes—the child who thinks potatoes grow on trees, and who mistakes a turkey for a goose—may still exist; but it is certain that there are hundreds of London children, even in the most seemingly unfavourable localities, who have learned from their own observation far more about plant and animal life than many village children ever know.

Expression is the next great principle we observe in modern infant school work. The child must not keep to himself what he has seen; he must express the results of his observation. And this he may do in several ways. Drawing is the first and most natural method of expression, and drawing plays a very large part in infant school work. In some form or other it enters into nearly every lesson. We have seen how even the babies in their reading lessons draw the objects represented by the words they read. And the same principle applies throughout the school. An object lesson is seldom complete till the children have drawn the object under observation or some part of it. If, for instance, a lesson has been given on the harvest, an ear of corn may be given to the children, and every one will draw in yellow chalk what he himself can see. The results will be very varied, but in every case the exercise will tend to strengthen the child's power of observation.

In some schools they go a step further and teach the children to express what they see with the inward as well as with the outward eye. A story is told to them and they produce original illustrations with coloured chalks. No artist's portfolio is fuller of interest—artistic and psychological—than the collections of original drawings that may be seen in some of our infant schools. There is no sense whatever of proportion or perspective. The drawings are symbolical rather than realistic, reminding one strongly of the first artistic efforts of primitive peoples. Infants have in fact very much in common with the cave men, and the natural path of development for the little child is much the same as that which the race has travelled. The recognition of this fact is proving very helpful to the intelligent treatment of little children.

Apart from its value as a means of expression, drawing as a means of hand and eye training is cultivated in infant schools with results which a former

generation of teachers would have regarded as little short of miraculous. Free-arm drawing is being increasingly adopted. In some schools the children stand at blackboards and manipulate the chalk with remarkable vigour and boldness ; in others, prepared millboard is used, the children sitting back in their seats and holding the millboard at arm's length. Brushwork is also taught in many schools and the teachers go straight to nature for their models. Little children of six or seven will draw a leaf or flower from nature with a little guidance from the teacher, and sometimes without even that. Every infant school teacher has to be an adept at blackboard drawing, and many of the teachers, by drawing with chalk on the frosted window panes, decorate their classrooms with a changeable picture gallery. These drawings are renewed from time to time, and apart from their value as lesson illustrations they do much to brighten the classrooms.

Clay modelling is valuable as a means of expression, and as an artistic exercise. Even in the "babies'" room many happy hours are spent with the soft, plastic material by means of which the natural child's delight in making mud pies is turned to educational account. Trays of sand are used for similar purposes at some schools.

Other occupations in great variety may be seen in progress in infant schools, bead work, paper folding, making wool mats and picture frames, sewing, paper and straw weaving and many others. They are all more or less valuable as methods of cultivating hand skill, but with regard to some of them the Board's medical officer has lately entered a caveat on the score of their trying effect on little eyes ; and generally speaking, those occupations which are chiefly imitative in character are being rejected in our best infant schools in favour of those which call for initiative on the part of the child or enable him to express the results of his observations in the nature lessons.

Kindergarten games and action songs find a place in all infant schools; and here again those are most valuable which are simple in character and afford the children a means of expressing themselves with some degree of freedom. London children do not know how to play; the old traditional games have, many of them, been forgotten, but when taught in the infant schools



A KINDERGARTEN GAME (FLEET ROAD SCHOOL).

they are received with delight, as are many of the charming new games and songs that have been written for little children. The dramatic instinct, which is strong in nearly all little children, finds delightful expression in these exercises, and there is no pleasanter sight in London than an organised game in an infant school, when it is a part of the daily round and not a rehearsal for an entertainment.

The ideal of expression rather than repression involves certain modifications in some old-established

notions of school discipline. In the best infant schools the discipline is not at all rigid. Watch the children as they march into school from the playground ; they step in time to the music of the piano, but they do not suggest soldiers a little bit. Freely and easily they walk along with arms swinging carelessly and eyes wandering over the room, but the order is quite as good as is needed and the children are ready to obey a word from the teacher. In the classrooms they are not told that they are "naughty" if they don't sit quite still with arms folded. A little fidgeting is recognised as inevitable, and if, as may sometimes be, a little child is sleepy, he just goes to sleep and nothing else happens. But for the most part the children are very intent on the lesson, eagerly answering questions and even occasionally volunteering remarks. Modern methods of school management and of teaching make strongly for the happiness of the children, who are generally eager to go to school, and it may truly be said that the modern infant school is a place of many smiles and few tears.

An interesting plan for inducing children to record their observations is followed at Clyde Street School, Deptford, and perhaps at other schools. Every morning the teacher collects the remarks of the children, elicited by questions, on any matters of interest that come under their notice, and records them in a diary. Here, for instance, are the entries in the diary of the "babies'" class for the first few days after the return from the summer holidays :—

"Monday.—Our holidays are over now, and we have come back to school. Some of our tadpoles have changed into little frogs, and don't live in the water now. Some fresh little children have come to school to-day. We will show them our little frogs.

"Tuesday.—The rain is coming down very fast and we cannot see the sun to-day. Some of us got wet on our way to school. A big boy brought us a big frog to look at. We saw it jump off the shelf.

"Wednesday.—The frog has come to live in our room. It sits in the corner nearly all the time. Sometimes it likes to stay in the water. We have given it a little baby frog to play with.

"Thursday.—Some snails crawled out of their box and climbed up the wall ever so high. They don't want to live in their box again. We will show them a cabbage leaf; then they will come down."

Another principle which governs the curriculum of modern infant schools is the correlation of lessons. All the lessons throughout the school are based on a central idea which is associated with the season of the year. Story and song, reading and recitation, writing, arithmetic, drawing and occupations are all related, the nature or object lesson serving as the unifying bond of the whole. Thus in October the object lessons will deal with the autumn leaves and the gathering of the harvest, leading perhaps to a lesson on the baker and his work; a song will be learned about "Autumn winds," and leaves or ears of corn will form the subjects for drawing or clay modelling. If a suitable reading lesson is not to be found in the school primer, the teacher will make her own, writing sentences on the blackboard which bear on the subject of the day.

Some of the infant school time-tables are models of ingenuity in fitting subject to subject, securing continuity of study and uniformity of method throughout the school. The infant school system is very elastic. The Code of the Education Department requires that children shall, as a rule, reach the First Standard by the age of seven (a too exacting demand, by the way, which children who do not begin their education till they are five or even six years old, and may then be absent for months with infantile illnesses, cannot possibly meet without being subject to unhealthy pressure); but as to the route by which this goal is to be reached neither the Department nor the School Board has much to say. The position, therefore, of the



headmistress of an infant school is one of much freedom and no little responsibility. Method is everything in an infant school, and upon the methods of working which the headmistress adopts and the spirit of co-operation and earnestness she is able to arouse amongst her teachers will depend very largely the success of the school. Her work is quite as important as that of the head teachers of the senior schools and far more exacting. Yet her salary is calculated on a lower scale than that of her colleague in the girls' department. This is an anomaly which is only explicable as a survival from days when infant schools were looked upon as places for minding little children rather than as educational institutions. But it is an anomaly which ought long ago to have been got rid of. Apart from the injustice to the head teachers themselves, it inflicts a stigma upon infant school work which tends to deter teachers from entering that branch of the service.

The idea that an infant school teacher's work is in some way inferior to that of teachers in senior schools has apparently not been wholly abandoned even by some of the Board members. But it has absolutely no justification in the conditions of the work. The infant school teacher must have the same educational qualifications as other teachers, and her work is peculiarly arduous. She must be ever on the alert, always bright and vivacious; she cannot rest while the children work, but must work with them all the time. And she must be prepared to fulfil to some extent the duties of nurse or foster mother to her young charges as well as teacher, guarding them against adverse physical conditions, watching for the first signs of illness and so on.

Another defect in infant school administration that is traceable to the same misapprehension of the conditions of the work is the great size of the classes. For years past there has been a tendency in the Board Schools to reduce the size of the classes, and in the

Higher Grade and Higher Elementary schools the classes are now for the most part of quite reasonable proportions. But in infant schools classes of sixty and seventy children are still very usual, and even classes of eighty are not unknown. Yet little children require individual attention even more than older children. Nothing would do more to help forward those intelligent methods of infant school teaching, which I have endeavoured to describe, than a great diminution in the size of the classes.

Another matter in which reform is needed is the very early age at which children go to school. The age for compulsory attendance begins at five, but children are received as soon as they are three, and in some schools even before that age, though teachers are not obliged to admit any child under three. The fact that these babies, while in school, are happy and well cared for does not prove that school is the best place for them. Even in the most wisely conducted schools, when every effort has been made to provide occupations within the range of their capacity and to make their lives bright and happy, there must remain an element of repression which is injurious to children of such tender years. For five hours daily, which become five and a half if they have to wait for elder brothers or sisters, these mites of humanity have to be kept in school under some degree of restraint. The Code does not recognise the need, nor do the Board Schools provide the accommodation, for the free and spontaneous exercise of limbs and lungs, except during the ten minutes' play-time which the babies enjoy in common with the rest of the school. It is the sheltered freedom of a nursery rather than the restraint, however kind and gentle, of a school that such young children require.

True, it is a great boon which the School Board confers on poor parents by taking care of their little children during a great part of the day. But the

elaborate machinery of a Board School is not the best adapted nor the most economical for rendering this social service. What seems to be wanted is a system of municipal nurseries where, under the care of kind, motherly women—not necessarily trained teachers—the little ones might enjoy a free but sheltered life spent largely in the open air. That there would be in the long run no educational loss under such a system may be argued from the experience of Germany, where school attendance before the age of six is forbidden by law.

There is another point that wants looking into. Teachers in the senior schools have up to the present taken little account of the new developments in infant school work. Consequently the transition from the one school to the other is often too violent, and the children are bewildered by the differences in methods of teaching and of discipline and in the whole atmosphere of the place. The free, observant, experimental ways of life have to give place to something more repressive, more formal, more bookish and mechanical. It takes some time for the child to adapt himself to the new conditions, and consequently the record of the first few months in the senior school is sometimes one not of progress but of actual retrogression. A closer co-ordination of method between the infant schools and the lower classes of the senior schools would do much to smooth the child's path and facilitate his progress. And the work of teachers in the boys' and girls' departments would often gain rather than lose by a more liberal recognition and adaptation of the ideas underlying recent developments in infant school work. And what are these ideas? That the little child is in a sense teacher as well as scholar; that the child's way is often better than the teacher's; that the teaching which the child most likes is generally that which is best for him; that he is not "naughty" when he is most natural; that his rest-

lessness and desire for activity and self-expression are to be used as helps to the teacher in his work, not as obstacles to be removed. The recognition of these things,—I do not say the discovery, for they were discovered long ago—is the great contribution of modern infant school teachers to educational progress.

## CHAPTER VI

### COMPULSORY SCHOOL ATTENDANCE

ANYONE who has much to do with Board Schools soon finds out that the question of school attendance is in the minds of nearly all School Board teachers and officers one of the very highest importance. He may even be disposed to think that a great deal too much is made of the matter. With many teachers regular attendance seems to have become almost an obsession ; a high average of attendance for their school or class seems to be the chief end of all their striving, and an outbreak of measles fills them with despair. Playing truant is the unpardonable sin in a Board School, and the model child, whom they decorate with medals, is he or she who is never late or absent. The explanation, and perhaps the justification, of what does indeed on the face of it appear to be a disproportionate emphasis on a quite minor matter is to be sought in the history and circumstances of School Board work.

When the School Board in 1871 decided to use to the full the compulsory powers conferred upon it by the Education Act of the previous year, it took a step which immensely increased the extent and the cost of its work. To provide school accommodation for such children as voluntarily presented themselves would have been a simple matter compared with the task of going into the highways and byways and compelling all and sundry to come to the educational feast. The decision meant running counter to the wishes of parents who wanted the wages their children could earn, of children who hated restraint of all kinds, of employers who were growing rich on the proceeds of child labour,

and of politicians and theorists who considered compulsory education to be, as Lord Brougham once said, "a violation of some of the most sacred principles—a violation of individual liberty—a system intolerable for the citizens of a free state."

Nevertheless it was a sound instinct which led the first Board to decide upon compulsory education, in spite of all obstacles. For unless it could compel the attendance of the most neglected and ignorant children in London, it would be leaving undone an important part—perhaps the most important part—of the work it was established to do; and unless it could secure a fair degree of regularity of attendance the work of the schools could never be carried out efficiently. We have seen how in the earliest schools, even under the operation of the compulsory clause, the teachers lamented their inability to get the children to attend punctually and regularly. They recognised, as teachers ever since have recognised, that regular attendance is the foundation of all efficiency. The child who is absent two or three times a week not only fails to receive the full benefit of the school teaching himself, but acts as a drag upon his more regular schoolfellows who have to be kept marking time while he is painfully endeavouring to reach the point they reached yesterday. The private school teacher might leave his irregular pupils to take their chance at the bottom of the class, but the reputation of the Board School teacher and the grants earned by his school have always depended on the level of attainment to which he can bring the great bulk of the scholars. Hence the emphasis which is placed on regular school attendance, and the large share of work and money devoted to it.

By degrees the School Board has elaborated and perfected a special organisation for the sole purpose of enforcing the laws relating to school attendance. And this organisation alone costs the ratepayers nearly £60,000 a year; while, if we added the cost of Industrial

and Truant Schools, of prizes for regular attendance and of various subsidiary efforts aiming at the same end, we should find that the total cost of getting the children to school amounts to a much larger sum still.

And what has been the result? The average attendance in Board Schools has risen from 65.8 per cent. in 1872 to 86.4 per cent. in 1903. Such figures show substantial progress, but it may well be asked whether even yet the position reached is one which the Board and the public ought to regard as a satisfactory return for over thirty years of continuous and costly effort. Thirteen or fourteen per cent. seems rather a large allowance for illness and other unavoidable causes of absence. It is impossible to ascertain the average attendance at all the secondary schools in London. But the record of two typical schools of high reputation may furnish some criterion of what is possible in the way of school attendance. At the St Olave's Grammar School and the Central Foundation School (boys' department) the average attendance—taking in the one case a period of four years and in the other a little less than one year—varies from just under 94 per cent. to 95 per cent. ; the figures at the two schools are practically identical. Ought we not to expect that our Board Schools should reach the same high level?

Before answering this question in a sense unfavourable to the Board Schools one very important point of difference should be noted. Setting aside the difference in social position and all that that involves, it must be remembered that the School Board averages refer to all children, including those in the infant schools. Naturally the infants are much less regular than older children, being more subject to childish ailments, less able to withstand inclement weather, and, in many cases, dependent on the ability of older persons to take them to and from school. Among the infants, too, are large numbers of tiny tots under five years of age, who are not obliged to attend school at all, and from whom it

would, of course, be absurd to expect great regularity of attendance.

Taking the attendance in boys' departments alone, we find that the average for the year ended Lady Day 1903 was 90.3 per cent. of those on the roll, while in a good many individual cases the secondary school standard—94 to 95 per cent.—has been reached. If we compare the London Board Schools with other elementary schools, we find that while the record for England and Wales excluding London (83 per cent.) has been excelled, that of the Leeds School Board during its last year of office (89 per cent.—senior departments 93 per cent.) and that of the Tottenham Board (90.1 per cent.) have not yet been equalled. While, therefore, it is evident that the strenuous efforts of successive Boards have met with a very large measure of success, it has to be admitted that, taking London schools as a whole, the position is not yet entirely satisfactory. But the line of average attendance has been steadily upwards for several years past, and the high water mark which a few schools have already reached should be attained by the majority before very long, provided the new authorities display as much energy in the matter as the School Board has done. The increasing in 1900 of the maximum fine for a breach of the bye-laws from 5s. to 20s. has had a salutary effect on persistently negligent parents; but the chief ground of hope for the future undoubtedly lies in the increasing number of parents who look upon the Board Schools with kindly eyes, having in many instances themselves been scholars in these schools and learned to appreciate the value of the education given.

In the early days of the School Board a great deal of energy had to be devoted to the work of forcing into the schools children whose parents were quite willing for them to grow up without any schooling whatever. But after thirty-three years of compulsory education, the idea that a child must go to school has become



pretty firmly engrained in the minds of all classes. The name of practically every child in London of the elementary school class is entered on the books of some efficient school, and the bulk of the effort put forth by the School Attendance Department of the Board is now directed not so much to increasing the school roll as to making the number of children present correspond more closely with the number on the roll. For there are still a large number of parents (not a large proportion of the whole, but in London a small minority may be a very large number) who will not be persuaded that they wrong their children by sending them to school only three or four days a week, and who will not willingly forego the convenience of having a child at home at frequent intervals to run errands, to mind the baby, or to help in some home industry.

When a child is absent from school without reasonable excuse, it is the duty of the teacher to do all he can to prevent the continuance of the irregularity. A remonstrance with the child, a note to the parents, or an interview with one of them, often proves sufficient. If not, a lithographed letter couched in polite and friendly terms is signed by the chairman of the managers and despatched to the child's parents; the letter points out the injury done to the child by keeping him from school, and urges the parents to make every effort to secure the child's regular attendance. When these persuasive methods prove unavailing, the special organisation—the £60,000 machinery—is brought into operation. Let us observe it at work.

A very important part of the machinery is the School Board visitor. The map of London is divided into more than 300 districts, each of which is allotted to a visitor. The average number of children in a district is about 2800, and it is the visitor's duty to see that every one of these children is being properly educated. Every day he sallies forth to visit such of his parishioners as need his attentions. A red ink circle

round the record of the child's attendance in the duplicate register, which he receives every week from all Board Schools and most Voluntary Schools in his district, calls his attention to the cases in which the teachers require his assistance. He calls at the homes of all the children thus indicated, in order to learn the cause of the irregularity in attendance. It may be that he will be repulsed with contumelious words, if not with still more offensive missiles. But happily for the visitors the day when that sort of reception was an ordinary experience belongs to the past, though in some of the rougher parts of London it is still anything but a primrose path the visitor has to tread. Generally speaking, however, the School Board visitor is now tolerated as a necessary evil—inevitable as the tax collector. In the great majority of cases his reception is outwardly civil, and an explanation—more or less plausible—of the child's absence is vouchsafed to him. The story he hears may be one of genuine distress, of children kept at home because they have no decent clothes, or sent to work before they are legally exempt from school, because their wages seem to stand between the family and starvation. In such cases, while pointing out that the law must be obeyed, the stern official not seldom makes himself the agent of relief by calling the attention of the school managers or some outside charitable organisation to the case. But, alas, his practised ear will often detect in the parental discourse the characteristics of stories associated with the cock and the bull. In any case he probably serves upon the parents an official document headed "Warning to Parents," and bearing the seal of the Board and the signature of the Superintendent of Visitors. This is known as Notice A., and informs the child's father or guardian that he has been guilty of a breach of the law in neglecting to send his child regularly and punctually to school, and warning him that he thus renders himself liable to be summoned before a magistrate and fined.

Every year for two or three weeks in the spring all the visitors are engaged simultaneously on another piece of work—the preparation of a schedule of all the elementary school children in London. Every house rated at £28 a year or less is visited and a record made of all the children under the age of fourteen, and of any over that age who may still be attending school. The home of every child whose name is on the roll of an elementary school is also visited to see whether there are other children living in the house, and visits may also be paid to other places where children of the elementary school class are likely to be found, such as servants' and caretakers' apartments, stables with living rooms, canal boats, etc.

Although the Board has no power to compel the giving of such information, the courteous request for it is seldom refused. The parents' statements as to the schools the children attend are verified by reference to the school registers. The schedules are corrected in detail from time to time; houses which have been noted as empty are visited as soon as they are again tenanted, and visitors in other districts are informed of families removing into those districts whenever the new address can be ascertained.

The School Board thus has a remarkably complete record of all the children in London who are or ought to be in an elementary school. The visitors are always on the look-out for children who are not on the schedule, but they find very few. Occasionally the divisional superintendent will organise a street raid, when all the visitors of the division, fifty or sixty in number, will spend a day in the streets interrogating the children whom they find there during school hours. Each man takes a district other than his own, so that the children may not recognise him and run away. Many children are thus found who ought to be in school, but very few whose names are not on the schedules and therefore on the school rolls. The meshes of the net

are now so fine that the fishes which slip through it are very few indeed. Nothing, perhaps, more clearly shows this than the work of the fifteen special visitors known as street visitors. These officials are specially told off to look after the children of the street Arab type who frequent the streets, open spaces, markets and railway stations, and they, if any, would be likely to find the children who have escaped school altogether. But according to the report for 1903 about 80 per cent. of the children found by the street visitors were on the roll of some school. Of the remainder some were compelled to attend school by means of a warning, and in some cases a prosecution of their parents, others were given into custody for begging or wandering—a step preliminary to their reception in Industrial Schools—and (alas for the guilefulness of the London gamin!) 921 gave wrong addresses and could not be traced.

So much for the visitor and his work. The next part of the machinery to be observed is the "Notice B. Meeting." The scene is a Board School classroom with three or four ladies and gentlemen seated at a table, to whom enters for an hour or more a stream of tired-looking mothers with an occasional father. The ladies and gentlemen are a sub-committee appointed by the divisional members of the Board, who form in each division the authority for carrying out the bye-laws. They may be either the local managers or other suitable persons who are willing to give a little time to the service of the schools. The parents are people who, having failed to take warning by Notice A., have received Notice B., which invites them to attend before the sub-committee to state any excuse they may have and show cause why they should not be summoned before a magistrate and fined. The fact that during the year 1902-3 no fewer than 86,641 Notices B. were issued, may give some idea of the extent of the operations of visitors and committees. Of course not everyone who receives the notice responds to the invitation, but

very many do, and the Notice B. Meeting proves a very valuable device for securing the observance of the law without resort to prosecution, and for preventing any harshness in the administration of the law.

The parents can, if they will, tell their story freely to the members of the committee, who are familiar with local conditions and willing to listen to extenuating circumstances, though firm in the determination that the law shall be obeyed. The character of the meeting varies according to the dispositions of the people on both sides of the table. Some parents are voluble, some taciturn; some go away promising amendment, others breathing defiance. And the chairman of the committee may adopt a sympathetic and conciliatory or a stern and threatening tone. But the upshot of the meeting is pretty much the same in all cases. Some of the difficulties, real or imagined, which have prevented the children from attending school are removed, and many parents accept the warning and send their children, for a time at any rate, with exemplary regularity. But others remain obdurate and compel the adoption of more drastic measures.

In some few cases the sub-committees have exercised their discretion and excused a child from attending school before the time of legal exemption arrived. When the Board, acting upon the powers conferred by the Education Act of 1900, decided to raise the age of exemption from thirteen to fourteen, there were some who expected a great outcry from parents; and there was every desire to carry out the important reform with a minimum of hardship. There has been no outcry; London has adapted itself quite easily to the new conditions, and the discretion exercised by the sub-committees has probably done not a little to prevent friction. In a few cases where the children had attained a fair standard of education, and where, owing to extreme poverty their earnings were badly needed, the new by-law was not enforced.

The next part of the machinery of compulsion we must go to the police courts to see. For after the sub-committee has done its best, and even after a final official warning, Notice B. 2, has been issued, there remains a residuum of cases in which prosecution is inevitable, if the law is not to be set at defiance. In no case, however, is a prosecution undertaken without the written authority of two Board members. The mere statement of the fact that there were during the year 1902-3 no fewer than 20,584 prosecutions by the London School Board might suggest that the Board delighted in litigation; but from what has already been said it will be seen that every possible effort is made to secure the observance of the law without resort to extreme measures, and the fact that in only six of these cases was the summons dismissed is a sufficient testimony to the care taken to avoid unnecessary prosecutions. Of the 20,584 cases 148 were prosecutions of employers for illegally employing children; the rest were prosecutions of parents for failing to send their children regularly to school.

Obviously the hearing of so many School Board cases entails a good deal of work for magistrates and police court officials. In the early days there were a good many magistrates who strongly resented having this extra burden placed on their shoulders, and the School Board superintendents found it difficult to get their cases heard, and still more difficult to obtain convictions. Some of the magistrates were quite unfriendly to the School Board, they did not believe in compulsory education, and thought a big boy who was poor had better be earning his living than learning to write and cipher. A faint echo of these obscurantist opinions may still occasionally be heard on the magisterial bench, but for the most part the magistrates are now friendly to the School Board and have shown themselves willing to facilitate its work.

The magistrates and all concerned have learned by

this time to economise time to the utmost. In every court certain hours every week are set apart for School Board cases, which are rushed through at an astonishing pace. Thirty or forty of these cases often form only part of an afternoon's work at a London police court. The superintendent of visitors prosecutes, and is provided in every case with the teacher's certificate of the child's attendance, the visitor's report of the results of his inquiries, and a record of previous convictions, if any. The visitor occupies the witness-box. A *verbatim* report of a typical case would read somewhat as follows:—Mrs Jones appears in answer to a summons for not sending her son Adolphus regularly to school.

Visitor (reading from his notes): "Adolphus, aged eleven, working in Standard II. has made 47 attendances out of 80."

The Magistrate: "What have you to say, Mrs Jones?"

Defendant: "Please, sir, I ain't got no boots to put on 'is feet. My 'usband's been out of work this four months, and I've got six little ones at 'ome."

Superintendent: "This is a bad case, sir. The boy has been constantly seen playing in the streets. There are two previous convictions."

Magistrate: "You must send the boy to school, and if you want boots, you should apply to the missionary. Ten shillings or fourteen days."

Some of the cases are briefer even than this; few are much longer.

The excuses are of the same kind as have been poured into the ears of visitors and committees, though in the police court they have to be stated with much less circumlocution. The "no boots" excuse appears again and again; one woman tries to evoke sympathy by holding up before the magistrates her child's only pair of boots—weird-looking objects which, regarded as foot-wear, would be distinctly worse than no boots at

all. A mother with a young baby in her arms says that she has been obliged to keep her daughter at home during her illness to look after the little ones and answer the door. A father protests that he does not wish his son to stay away, but having to go to work early in the morning, he cannot help it if the boy won't go to school. One fond mother declares that her daughter is too delicate to go to school every day, being subject to fainting fits, and another bears witness to the wickedness of her young hopeful who, though dragged to school every morning, plays truant every afternoon, there being no one while the mother is at work to see that he goes to school. Some children are alleged to be suffering from various grim diseases, and others to be kept at home because of infectious illness in the house.

The observer in the police courts, listening to these pitiful complaints, and noting the abrupt way in which the superintendent brushes them aside and the magistrate inflicts penalties, might be inclined to regard the School Board administration of the law as harsh and pitiless, if he knew nothing of what had gone before. But knowing the elaborate efforts made in every case to secure regularity of attendance without resorting to extreme measures, he may be sure that practically every case brought into the police courts is really a bad one. The women who complain of want of boots or clothes for their children have not sought the help they might have obtained from the committees or the police courts; moreover, the bootless children have been playing about the streets in all kinds of weather, though unable to go to school. The deadly diseases from which the children have been suffering have not prevented their attendance at school three days in every week, and the measles or whooping-cough is shown to have broken out since the period to which the summons relates. In this connection it may be pointed out that it is as much the visitor's and the teacher's duty to pre-



vent the attendance at school of children living in houses where there is infectious disease as to secure the attendance of others.

In any case of doubt as to the facts, the magistrate orders an adjournment, and quite frequently he does so merely to give the culprit another chance. If, after a month's interval the child is found to have been attending regularly, the superintendent may ask for a further adjournment to see whether the improvement continues, or he may at once withdraw the summons, warning the parents that this record will tell against them in case of future irregularities.

In regard to cases where parents protest their inability to make their children attend school, the Board has to be careful not to play into the hands of dissolute parents who are only too pleased to get their children clothed and fed mainly at the public expense, the parents' contributions being generally but a fraction of the cost of keeping a child at an Industrial School, even if it is possible to enforce the payment at all. But when the case is considered to be a suitable one for an Industrial or Truant School the magistrate makes an order for the child to attend school, and on that order being disobeyed commits the child to a Truant or Industrial School in accordance with the recommendation of the superintendent, a special sub-committee of the Board having in the interval considered the case and decided upon the particular institution to be selected.

In the majority of cases, however, a fine is inflicted, though in this matter there is great inequality of administration at the various courts. One magistrate will inflict a fine of 3s. or 5s. for the same offence as would be punished by others with a fine of 15s. or 20s. Magistrates sometimes express surprise that some of the poor people who come before them can afford to pay fines again and again. The fact is, no doubt, that the earnings of the children who are illegally employed either at home or elsewhere more than make up for an

occasional 5s. fine. But a fine of 20s. is another matter, and magistrates who enforce the maximum penalty in cases of repeated defiance of the law are doing much to diminish the number of such cases and improve the attendance at the schools.

There is also another side to the work of developing regular and punctual attendance, of which something must be said. The School Board rewards regularity as well as penalises irregularity. A medal is given to children who attend for a whole year without being late or absent once, and prizes are also given to those whose attendance is only a little less perfect. Some of the scholars are entitled to wear almost as many decorations as a victorious general; eight, nine, even ten medals are the splendid testimonial both to punctual habits and good health which some of them can show. There is one family which proudly displays fifty-two medals, each representing a year's perfect school attendance on the part of one of its members, and in a great many households the books won by the children make a brave show in the sitting-room, forming often the great bulk of the home library.

The plan of giving prizes for attendance only, which rather tended disproportionately to exalt a single virtue, and sometimes to penalise misfortune, has been wisely modified within the last few years by making prize grants to the schools based upon their average attendance, but allowing the teachers to apportion the prizes as they please. The award of a banner to the class making the best average attendance for the week has tended to enlist public opinion on the side of regular attendance. Not only the natural and honourable ambition to do better than other classes is aroused by this means, but also the equally natural, if less exalted, desire to secure certain small privileges which the teacher may have devised for the winning class.

## CHAPTER VII

### THE RELIGIOUS INSTRUCTION QUESTION

OF all the problems connected with elementary school work in England that of the nature of the religious instruction (if any) to be given to the children would seem to be the one most difficult of solution. To no other question have educational authorities in London and elsewhere devoted so much attention, no other question has aroused such prolonged and bitter controversy or excited so large a measure of public interest. To very many English people the education question means the religious instruction question—that and nothing more; and this is one reason why educational progress has been so slow in England.

And yet this question, which has loomed so large in educational politics, has had a very small place in the actual work of the schools. "The religious difficulty," as it is called, is almost wholly factitious; it does not arise out of the work of teaching; it is not raised by those most closely concerned in the work—the parents, the teachers and the scholars. "The religious difficulty does not exist," said one of the investigators employed by the Newcastle Commission to conduct the inquiry which preceded the establishment of a national system of education under the Act of 1870. It was shown that parents were very seldom guided in their choice of schools by consideration of the character of the religious teaching. "There seems to be general indifference to formularies," said one of the Commissioners, speaking of London parents, "but even those who themselves have

very little religious thought of any kind have a notion that religion is a good thing for their children." Similar testimony might have been borne at any time during the past thirty years; parents desire that their children should receive religious instruction (not necessarily at the public expense), but are not very keen on definite dogmatic teaching. This attitude of the great mass of London parents was an important factor in determining the settlement of 1871, and must be not less regarded in any new settlement that may be made.

Under the Education Act of 1870 the option of giving religious instruction in the schools was left to the School Boards, subject, however, to certain stipulations of a negative character. If a School Board decided to give religious instruction, it was bound to observe the conditions laid down in section 7 of the Act—that the time during which any religious observance is practised or instruction in religious subjects is given must be either at the beginning or the end of the school meeting, and that any scholar may be withdrawn by his parent from such observance or instruction without forfeiting any of the other benefits of the school; and the condition in section 14 (the Cowper-Temple clause), that no religious catechism or religious formulary which is distinctive of any particular denomination shall be taught in the school.

The Act of 1870, with its recognition of Church schools as "public elementary schools" on the one hand, and its exclusion of Church teaching from Board Schools on the other, was itself of the nature of a compromise, but this Parliamentary Compromise must be distinguished from the School Board Compromise, which was the outcome of subsequent discussion in the Board room of the London School Board. The resolution constituting the Compromise was moved by Mr W. H. Smith and seconded by Mr Samuel Morley, and after slight verbal amendment was accepted by the Board by 38 votes to 3 in the following terms:—

“That in the schools provided by the Board the Bible shall be read, and there shall be given such explanations and such instruction therefrom in the principles of morality and religion as are suited to the capacities of children, provided always (1) that in such explanations and instruction the provisions of the Act in sections 7 and 14 be strictly observed both in letter and spirit, and that no attempt be made in any such schools to attach children to any particular denomination; (2) that in regard to any particular school the Board shall consider and determine upon any application by managers, parents or ratepayers of the district, who may show special cause for exception of the school from the operation of this resolution, in whole or in part.”

This, then, was the famous Compromise which has governed religious teaching under the London School Board throughout the whole period of its existence (a slight amendment was made twenty years later, but, as we shall see, the spirit of the rule remained unchanged), and which has been adopted by a very large number of School Boards throughout the country. The alternative solutions of secular education and Bible reading without note or comment were proposed as amendments, but it was felt that neither of these contained the promise of a lasting settlement. And it is noteworthy that Mr Smith's proposals were accepted as the best practicable solution by many who regarded the arrangement as anything but an ideal one. Mr Smith himself frankly admitted that the resolution did not embody his own preferences on the subject of religious training; and Professor Huxley, in supporting the resolution, made it clear that he too would have advocated a different solution had popular feeling in the matter been different from what it was.

The resolution was left intentionally vague, no attempt being made to define the doctrines and principles to be taught. The interpretation of the rule was left to the good taste and common sense of the

teacher. Of course it was a great trust to place in the hands of teachers into whose religious views the Board could not, without violating the spirit of its own rules, make any inquiry. But very rarely indeed has the trust been abused.

It has been argued that recent events have demonstrated the unwisdom and futility of the Compromise of 1871. But such a view leaves out of sight some very extensive changes which have taken place during the thirty years' interval. It might fairly be argued that the Compromise of 1871 could form no satisfactory solution for the problems of 1904. But it was nevertheless a wise and statesmanlike measure for the needs and circumstances of the time. The framers of the Compromise are scarcely to be blamed for not having foreseen on the one hand a great development of the view that the State ought not to concern itself with religious education, and on the other hand a growing dissatisfaction with anything short of dogmatic denominational instruction. Still less can they be blamed for not having foreseen the political reaction of the last few years. The endowment of privately managed denominational schools with public funds, and the passive resistance which this has evoked, may well have made compromise on the lines of the School Board rules an impossible policy for our times, though in other times and other circumstances it proved a valuable instrument of progress.

One flaw, and a serious one, the Compromise had. It made no provision for the teacher who could not conscientiously teach as true the narratives of the Bible, and the theological doctrines which all Christian churches hold in common. It is conceivable that now and again such a teacher might, by straining the Board's rule a little, have dealt with the Bible as literature without intellectual dishonesty on his own part and at the same time without a suggestion that could tell against any religious teaching the children might elsewhere receive.

The Rev. Stewart Headlam has maintained that that is the way in which all Board teachers, not only those of sceptical views, should deal with the Bible,—teaching it as literature only, and not deducing from it any dogma or moral teaching, not even the most universally accepted. But few are likely to succeed, even if it is desirable to try, in entirely dissociating Biblical from theological and moral teaching. And it is to be feared that the teaching of Scripture by teachers of sceptical views must sometimes have had a demoralising effect on the teacher and resulted in very lifeless and perfunctory lessons. Certainly it was this practice, or the possibility of this practice, which placed in the hands of the enemies of the School Board system of religious teaching their most effective weapon.

As a general rule, however, there is no doubt whatever that the Compromise worked exceedingly well. It satisfied the teachers. It is not from them that the sneers against “undenominational religion,” and “Board School Christianity” have come. This unsectarian religious teaching was no new thing; it had been the teaching of the British Schools, and even of many National Schools, though in the latter the Bible lessons might be supplemented by lessons on the Church catechism. The practical teacher, whatever his personal views, does not often wish to teach the divisive dogmas of the churches; he knows that it is not only possible but easy to teach religion on unsectarian lines, and that for the very youngest children any other kind of teaching is almost impossible. And the Compromise satisfied the parents. The right to withdraw their children from the religious teaching was scarcely ever taken advantage of. There are many teachers of twenty years’ experience or more, who can only recall two or three cases of withdrawals during the whole time of their association with the Board.

As to the character of the religious teaching given in the Board Schools in the early days we cannot get

better evidence than is afforded by the reports of the Board's inspectors. One of the inspectors in his report for 1873 says : " After most careful observation both in the teaching and the examination, I have come to the following conclusion : that, with the single exception of the catechism of the Church of England, the Bible teaching in our Board Schools is precisely the same as in the great majority of Voluntary Schools." Another inspector in the same year says : " This instruction is in no way less reverentially imparted than in Voluntary Schools, and I have observed no desire on the part of a teacher in any instance to shorten this essential part of his duty. It is but just to say of all our teachers that they seem to be fully impressed with the importance of this part of their work, and at the same time are anxious to avoid the violation of the Board's regulations and the Act of Parliament by giving this teaching a denominational colour."

There is no real evidence that the general character of the Scripture teaching has in any way changed at any time during the history of the Board. But there has been no lack of critics of this part of the Board's work. The earlier form which the criticism took was the expression of a fear that the Bible lessons—not being subject like the rest of the school work to inspection and examination by Her Majesty's inspectors—were more or less perfunctory and ineffective. More recently the Biblical teaching has been fiercely assailed on doctrinal grounds as subversive of true Christianity.

It was the earlier and milder criticism which led to the establishment of the Board's annual Scripture examination. In 1876 Mr Francis Peek, who was then a member of the School Board, offered to provide Bibles and Testaments as prizes, if the Board would institute an annual voluntary examination in Scripture knowledge. The offer was the subject of a good deal of discussion ; some members fearing lest this should prove the thin end of the wedge of denominationalism,



were in favour of declining the offer, and memorials were presented to the Board from Nonconformists and from working men urging this view of the matter. In the end, however, the Board decided to accept the offer, and Mr Peek paid £5000 to the Religious Tract Society, who agreed to provide the prizes yearly.

The fears of the objectors proved quite groundless, as have so many other fears which had their origin in the mutual distrust of the advocates and opponents of denominational religious instruction. It has been found quite possible year after year to frame questions in Scripture knowledge, which have been entirely free from sectarian bias. The questions are based on the passages of Scripture prescribed for study in each Standard by the Scripture syllabus of the Board. This syllabus, which is drawn up annually by the Sub-Committee on Scripture Knowledge, has been adopted by many other educational authorities throughout the country, and even in other English-speaking lands. This is one of many matters in which the London School Board has been legislating for many thousands of children besides those for whom it was legally responsible.

For many years the work of Scripture teaching went on without any real difficulty arising. Questions affecting particular schools or groups of schools—such as the Jews' schools and the Industrial Schools—were dealt with as they arose, in a reasonable and conciliatory spirit, while in the schools themselves the Scripture lessons were given with the thoroughness and efficiency which were becoming characteristic of all the Board's teaching. Naturally a good teacher did not become a poor one when he taught Scripture. Not that there was absolute uniformity of method. Teachers interpreted the Compromise for themselves, and interpreted it differently,—some carefully avoiding all dogmatic teaching, others teaching such dogmas as they considered to be common to all Christian churches.

The years of peace, however, came to an end. By

1893 there had arisen a generation of Board members which knew not W. H. Smith, and Samuel Morley, and had no veneration for the Compromise. The leader of the malcontents was Mr Athelstan Riley, a young man of High Anglican views, who was frankly hostile to the School Board system. With great ability and immense persistence Mr Riley carried on week after week and month after month a vigorous campaign against the School Board Compromise. That is a not unfair statement of the case, though Mr Riley himself always maintained that it was not the Compromise itself, but the current interpretation of the Compromise that he was attacking.

The great fight began in this wise: the Rev. J. J. Coxhead, who was then a member of the Board, happened to be present in an infants' school when a *viva voce* Scripture examination by the teachers was in progress. The question was asked, "What was the name of the father of Jesus?" and each child called upon answered "Joseph." The answer was accepted as correct, without further explanation being given. The incident to the ordinary mind seems trivial enough, and remembering that the children who gave these answers were not seven years of age, it seems a very small peg on which to hang an argument for altering a system of teaching that had been working harmoniously for more than twenty years. However, it served Mr Riley's purpose, and having ascertained further that some headmasters considered that they had no right under the Board's rules to teach the doctrine of the Trinity, he argued that much of the religious teaching was Unitarian in character, and moved that it should be an instruction to teachers to teach the doctrine of the Trinity.

The proposal was hotly contested, not for the most part on the ground that this doctrine ought not to be taught in the schools, but on the broad ground of objection to the Board's prescribing, except in a negative

sense, the nature of the religious teaching. It was urged that the School Board was not a body which could assume the functions of an Œcumenical Council, that the assertion of one doctrine as essential would lead to the assertion of others (and here, of course, the Nonconformist dread of Anglican teaching found expression), that the only method of maintaining the Compromise and securing effective teaching was by leaving the teacher a large measure of freedom, and that the defining of dogmas to be taught would inevitably lead to the imposing of religious tests for teachers.

On the other hand, Mr Riley maintained that the Compromise must be interpreted in a Christian sense, and that it was a wrong to the children that the Christian character of the religious teaching should be left in any doubt; and when Mr Riley and those who acted with him spoke of Christian teaching, they always meant definite dogmatic teaching.

Of course the religious instruction given in the schools had never been anything but "Christian," if that term were used in a broad sense. The syllabus which the teachers had to follow was sufficient to secure this, and some of the members thought that, if all that was wanted was a guarantee against the teaching of Buddhism or Confucianism in the schools, there could be no harm in giving it. A resolution, therefore, which was moved by Sir Cameron Gull, to insert the word "Christian" before "religion" in the Board's rule respecting religious instruction found general acceptance. Thus the rule now reads: "The Bible shall be read, and there shall be given such explanations and such instruction therefrom in the principles of the Christian religion and of morality as are suited to the capacities of children."

This, however, was not sufficient to satisfy those who had been filled with alarm by the story of the Unitarian infants encountered by Mr Coxhead. The Christian

religion might be variously interpreted; it must be defined. Accordingly, Mr Riley gave notice of a resolution: "That by the Christian religion the Board understands that religion which includes as essential a belief in the incarnation of the Son of God; that is to say, that Jesus Christ our Lord, born of the Virgin Mary, is both God and man." After prolonged and heated discussion, the whole matter was referred to the School Management Committee. This gave the Board a little breathing-space, but did not, of course, finally dispose of the question. It came before the Board again in the form of a recommendation that a circular should be sent to the teachers instructing them to teach on the lines laid down in Mr Riley's resolution. Naturally, this proposal was hotly contested; various alternative circulars were suggested, but at last, on March 15, 1894, the committee's circular was carried by twenty-seven votes to twenty-one. The circular distinctly required the teaching of the doctrine of the Trinity, and added: "The Board cannot approve of any teaching which denies either the divine or the human nature of the Lord Jesus Christ, or which leaves on the minds of the children any other impression than that they are bound to trust and serve Him as their God and Lord." Teachers who could not conscientiously teach on these lines might, on making application to the Board, be relieved of the duty of giving Scripture lessons.

It was now more than a year since the case of the heterodox babies first demanded the attention of the Board, and during the whole of that period the Board meetings had been almost entirely taken up with discussions of some aspect of the religious question. But the sending of the circular by no means ended the controversy; it only brought a new body of combatants into the arena, namely, the teachers. The teachers generally resented a document which they felt would create disabilities and operate as a religious test, and more than 3000 of them, that is to say about 40 per

cent. of the teaching staff, asked to be relieved of the duty of giving Scripture lessons, unless the circular were withdrawn. The members of the majority, who were responsible for the policy of the circular, now found themselves in something of a quandary. To withdraw the circular would be to stultify themselves; to reduce the teaching staff by 40 per cent. during the first hour of each day would seriously disorganise the work of the schools. They decided to temporise. A letter was sent to the objectors asking each one individually to state whether he could not conscientiously give instruction under the circular. The great majority of the 3000 declined to answer this letter, except collectively through their organisation, the Metropolitan Board Teachers' Association, to the effect that they had nothing to add to their former communication, but again begged that the circular might be withdrawn.

The circular was not at once withdrawn, but it remained for a while in a state of suspended animation. Both sides were getting very tired of the religious controversy, and there was a tacit agreement to let the matter rest. Meanwhile, in the schools nothing was altered; the objecting teachers went on giving their Scripture lessons in the old way, ignoring the circular, though no doubt their teaching was in many cases quite in accordance with the terms of the circular, as it always had been.

While the controversy was in full swing a report on the Bible teaching in the schools was issued by the Board inspectors, and published in the Report of the School Management Committee for 1893. The inspectors say: "We are not of opinion that any, practically speaking, of the teachers fail to carry out section 14 of the Elementary Education Act in letter and spirit. No doubt it is far from easy to say what religious, as apart from moral, instruction can be given without offence to somebody. The teaching is in

general, we venture to say, such as would satisfy the majority of Englishmen in this matter; the fatherhood of God and the brotherhood of man are the keynotes of it. So far as examination can test it, the upshot of the lessons may be said to be the acquisition of a very fair knowledge of the Biblical story, and the committal to memory, and perhaps to heart, of a considerable amount of the Bible text." But such a report, however satisfactory it might seem to the average non-ecclesiastical mind, could have little effect on those who held, as Mr Riley held, that no teaching could be called Christian which did not include the inculcation of certain theological dogmas, and that it was the duty of the School Board to provide such teaching.

Naturally the exciting incidents and heated debates resulting from the raising of the religious question brought the London School Board prominently before the eyes of the general public. It is somewhat unfortunate that the period when the proceedings of the Board were least worthy of attention should have been the period when it received a larger measure of public attention than at any time before or since. For, as so often happens in the discussion of religious questions, the religious spirit was not always conspicuously present at these debates; and the public, who read of what went on at Board meetings during this stormy period, learned little of the really characteristic work of the London School Board. At meeting after meeting the religious question was before the Board in one form or another, and the sittings were many times prolonged till a very late hour. The agenda paper steadily increased in length, owing to matters being held over from week to week, for the Board had little time, while the religious wrangle was in progress, to devote to the ordinary educational questions which were awaiting attention. Had it not been for the system of delegation to committees of large administrative powers, the educational machine must almost have broken down.

Fortunately, the committees continued to do the real work of the Board, then as ever unreported and almost unknown to the general public, and the protagonists of the Board room worked amicably together in the committee rooms at the hundred and one details of educational administration.

Meanwhile, deputation after deputation attended before the Board to argue for or against the policy of the circular, and to submit to examination and cross-examination by the supporters and opponents of the views they represented. In these encounters the logical weakness of the Compromise, as it had stood for twenty years, was revealed again and again, and the dialectical victory did not always rest with those who would maintain it unimpaired. But the great argument from practical experience was never refuted: the Compromise was shown to be working harmoniously and satisfactorily, while the new proposals had in them elements which would certainly lead to disagreement, suspicion and strife.

The School Board certainly did not enhance its reputation with the public by its dealings with the religious question, and the result of the election of 1897, when for the first time for twelve years the Progressive party secured a majority, was in large measure an expression of public disapproval of the party thought to be chiefly responsible for the barren discussions of the preceding years. Both the public and the members of the Board were by this time utterly weary of the religious controversy, and every member of the new Board was anxious to avoid incurring the odium of re-opening it. So that it was found possible, without arousing discussion and agitation, quietly to withdraw from the standing orders to teachers the famous circular which had already long been a dead letter.

The result, therefore, of the long campaign on behalf of the revision of the settlement of 1871 was, so far as the schools generally were concerned, absolutely *nil*.

The Scripture lessons continued to be given as they had been from the beginning. The religion to be taught in the schools had been defined as the Christian religion, but as it had never been anything else than Christian in a broad sense, and as the attempt to give a narrow interpretation to the term was finally rejected, the change was merely a matter of words.

In one special direction, however, some degree of success attended the campaign of the denomination-alists. It had been the custom in the Board's Industrial schools, and in some of the Industrial Schools with which the Board had agreements, to divide the children roughly into Protestants and Roman Catholics, securing for the Catholic children the ministrations of a priest of their own church, and for the rest a training in the ridiculed "Board School Christianity," welcoming to this end the help of suitable ministers and laymen of any Protestant communion, who were willing to share in the religious training of the children on broad, unsectarian lines. At the Brentwood Industrial School, for instance, it was found that a Nonconformist minister and a layman were conducting undenominational services for all the Protestant boys; at the Highbury Truant School Mr J. W. Sharp, a respected member of the School Board, was holding similar services; at the Field Lane Industrial School at Hampstead, to which some of the School Board children were sent, it was found that the children attended three neighbouring places of worship in sections, and that the section which attended church one month would go to chapel the next.

The simple folk who thought by such arrangements as these to avoid offending anyone's religious susceptibilities, while serving the real interests of the children, had reckoned without the Anglo-Catholic party. To Mr Riley and his friends it seemed like the neglect of a sacred duty to allow children not ear-marked as Dissenters, Romanists or Jews to be brought up other-



wise than in the strict tenets of the Church of England. And as the Industrial Schools Act decreed that children should be brought up, as far as possible, in accordance with the religious persuasion of their parents, the Board was induced to sanction a more rigidly denominational system in Industrial and Day Industrial Schools. The workers at Brentwood, who had given voluntary service with great acceptance for many years, were told that their help was no longer required, though they were at liberty still to give instruction to the children (if any) of their own denomination; Mr Sharp continued his kindly ministrations at Highbury, but as the authorised representative of the Church of England to Church boys only; and the managers of the Field Lane School consented to modify their arrangements, so that Church of England children might receive Church of England instruction only.

Parents who took so little care of their children as to allow them to be committed to Industrial Schools were not likely to be very particular as to the exact shade of theological belief in which they were brought up. The distinction between Catholic and Protestant was all that most of them cared for or understood, and if asked further to define their denominational preferences, they would as likely as not reply that "they didn't care a —," in which case the child would of course be scheduled as Church of England. Mr Sharp told of a boy at the Highbury Truant School who, when asked what his father was, said he was not a Christian nor a Jew nor a Catholic nor a Dissenter, but a lamp-lighter; he was put down Church of England. And the practical effect on the Industrial Schools generally of the determination to bring up the children according to the nominal religious faith of their indifferent and neglectful parents was, of course, that the great majority received definite Church teaching, which was, no doubt, the result desired by those who started the discussion.

But notwithstanding all the bitter conflicts which have raged round questions of religious instruction, there have not been wanting instances in which these questions have been dealt with in a common sense and conciliatory spirit, and with the happiest results. The case of the Jews' schools is a good example of this, and shows the adaptability of the Board's rules, when interpreted without theological rancour, to any legitimate need. In the East End of London there are many schools in which the majority of the children are Jews. At these schools arrangements are made for the Jewish children to be taught by teachers of their own faith, who give them instruction in the Old Testament Scriptures and in the Hebrew language, the Christian pupils meanwhile receiving from a Christian teacher the Scripture teaching according to the Board's syllabus. Jewish teachers are naturally appointed to these schools as far as possible, but Christian teachers can, and in some cases do, give Biblical instruction to the Jewish pupils, confining their lessons to the Old Testament. Some tact and discretion are needed, of course. A young teacher once explained to a class of Jewish pupils the use of the plural in the sentence "Let us make man in our own image" as a reference to the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost. But such awkwardness, we may be sure, is quite exceptional, or the system would not work so well as it does. In many of the Board Schools frequented by Jewish children well organised Sunday Schools are held, in which the more distinctive doctrines of the Jewish faith are taught. The arrangements are in the hands of a voluntary society, which pays the School Board a rent for the use of the rooms.

In addition to the Scripture teaching, it is the practically universal custom in Board Schools to begin the day with a hymn and prayer. The prayers are chosen by the head teachers and the managers; sometimes they consist simply in the repetition of the Lord's Prayer; sometimes one or more of the short prayers

from the Book of Common Prayer are used. In many of the Jewish schools the managers have adopted the following simple and appropriate prayer written by the Chief Rabbi, Dr Adler:—"Almighty God, we humbly offer unto Thee our prayers for all Thy goodness. We thank Thee for the health of body and of mind which Thou hast mercifully granted us. We thank Thee for the lessons that improve us and for the knowledge we gain from day to day. Lead us, O God, in Thy ways, so that we may increase in goodness as we increase in knowledge. Keep pure our hearts that we may think no evil. Guard our lips from falsehood and our hands from wrong-doing. Help us, O God, to obey Thy law, and strengthen us to resist temptation. Help us, O God, to do our duty to all about us, that we may work Thy will on earth and earn Thy heavenly reward. Amen."

Such, then, are very briefly the history and present position of the religious instruction controversy under the London School Board. It seems clear that we are on the eve of important changes in this matter, for the amendment of the Acts of 1902 and 1903 is almost universally admitted to be inevitable. It is not my purpose to discuss what the settlement should be. But this at least seems to emerge from the story of the past: a settlement which one side rejects is no settlement. The Church of England has inflicted a heavy defeat on Nonconformity; the trouble is not to be ended by Nonconformity, when its hour comes, inflicting a heavy defeat on the Church. Anglo-Catholics are not likely to accept universal Cowper-Templeism, and Dissenters are not likely to agree to Church teaching at the charge of the rates. When these facts are recognised, there may be hope that the unholy war will end—to the great gain of Education and of Religion.

## CHAPTER VIII

### PHYSICAL TRAINING AND ATHLETICS

RECENT discussions and investigations regarding the physical condition of the people lend special interest to the inquiry as to what the London School Board has done and is doing to develop the physical powers of the boys and girls in its charge.

At no time has the Board wholly ignored its responsibilities in this matter. Within a few months of its appointment the first London School Board passed a resolution to the effect that it was highly desirable that means should be provided for physical training and drill in schools established by the Board. Very soon afterwards a committee of the Board was investigating the possibility of teaching swimming. Inquiry was made as to the existing accommodation for bathing in the metropolis, and the number of swimming baths that would grant special facilities for children. The result of the inquiry was anything but encouraging. It was found that there were then only about twenty-five swimming baths in London, and that only three of these would offer special terms. The committee recommended that the Board should build a swimming bath in connection with one of its new schools, but it was found that under the Education Act the Board had no power to expend money either in providing swimming baths or in paying for the children to attend existing public baths. There, for the time being, the matter had to rest, and it was many years before

anything was done in an official or organised way to teach swimming to Board School children.

The decision to teach drill, however, was carried out to a certain extent. But the work was started on quite wrong lines. The great aim of teachers generally seemed to be to get the boys to march and turn and wheel with clockwork precision and to hold themselves as stiff as pokers. The drill sergeant rather than the gymnastic teacher was their model. In girls' schools practically nothing was done, and even the inadequate drill of the boys' schools was of an intermittent character. The older schools had no central hall, so that exercises had to be carried out in the playground or not at all, and, of course, inclement weather put a stop to them altogether. In times, too, of special pressure in the school work—just before the annual Government examination, for instance—the drill was liable to be quietly dropped in order to get in a few more minutes for the subjects on which grants depended, for these, of course, were the bad old days of "payment by results." No doubt even the modicum of drill that was given had a certain disciplinary value, but it is difficult to believe that it was of the slightest value from the point of view of physical training.

Another well-intentioned but useless development which belongs to the early days of the School Board was the provision of fixed gymnastic apparatus in some of the school playgrounds. The horizontal bars were too thick for little hands, and the width of the parallel bars was far too great; and as the boys were left to fall about on these unsuitable appliances without instruction or supervision, accidents occurred, and it was found necessary to remove the apparatus altogether.

In course of time the conditions of physical training improved somewhat. It was discovered that military manœuvres and physical culture were not quite the same thing, and gradually the methods of the drill sergeant were superseded by those of the teacher of

gymnastics. Swedish drill was introduced into the girls' schools, and a system of physical exercises compiled by Mr T. Chesterton, who had been appointed organising teacher to the School Board, was generally adopted in boys' schools. Teachers were required to qualify themselves for giving instruction, and physical exercise took a definite place in the time-table of every



QUARTER-STAFF EXERCISES (MONTM STREET SCHOOL).

Board School. But the fact that for years only half an hour a week was given to the subject shows the small esteem in which it was held. At the present time one hour a week—generally three lessons of twenty minutes each—has to be devoted to physical training both in boys' and girls' departments.

Of all the work done in a school there is none which so well lends itself to purposes of display as physical drill. No school entertainment nowadays is complete without an exhibition of drill. Once a year at the

Albert Hall a great demonstration is given of the physical exercises taught in the London Board Schools. It is a most interesting function and is attended by many members of the School Board and large numbers of the public. The exercises shown are of considerable variety; the programme at the 1903 display included, besides extension exercises without apparatus, displays with dumb-bells and Indian clubs, flag drill, ball drill, and fencing and quarter-staff exercises. In every case the exercises were performed with admirable grace and precision, and the boys in neat athletic garb and girls in pretty gymnastic costumes—each school having its distinctive colours—filled the arena with a succession of the most fascinating living pictures. "If I could take that show round the world with me," remarked a famous entertainer as he left the hall, "I would make a fortune with it." And no doubt he spoke the literal truth, for there is not a more charming spectacle to be seen in London in the course of a year than that which the Albert Hall affords on the July afternoon when the children of the Board Schools hold the floor.

But, after all, the exercises were not devised to entertain the public. The important question is: What is their effect on the physique of the children? As far as one can judge from watching the Albert Hall display, the effect even upon the picked children of the picked schools is not at all remarkable. The young performers look healthy and happy enough, but the broad chests and sturdy limbs that should result from a prolonged course of scientific physical culture are not very greatly in evidence. The squads vary a good deal, but only one or two seem to have attained a high average of physical vigour. And if the effect of the work on the physique of the Albert Hall squads is so inconsiderable, it is fair to suppose that the effect on the general run of Board School children is even less. For at this display we have undoubtedly the high-water mark of physical culture, so far as it has yet gone

in the day schools of the School Board. The spectators may suppose, and the chairman's speech may lend colour to the idea, that what they are looking at is a sample of the ordinary work of the average Board School. But the fact is that the standard of excellence reached at the Albert Hall display is far in advance of what can be accomplished in an hour's work a week. For months before the display the special squads have been practising assiduously, attending early or remaining late in order to get extra time for drill, and many of their exercises are specially arranged for the display, and are not at all such as would be seen in the schools at ordinary times. The annual display alone is likely to give the observer a misleading idea of the physical training in the London Board Schools; the experience needs to be supplemented by observation of ordinary drill lessons in the schools, when the stimulus of an approaching display is absent.

It is to be feared that many teachers carry out this part of their duties in a rather unsympathetic spirit. Some, especially teachers of the old school, begrudge the time taken from the ordinary studies; others feel the hopelessness of accomplishing anything useful in the way of physical development in the very short time at their disposal; others again are obsessed by the display idea, and waste time on trivial matters of "dressing," "covering," and simultaneity of movement, which would be much better spent in getting a little vigorous work out of the children.

The only schools at which physical training seems to be carried out under the London School Board with real efficiency are the residential schools and the Day Industrial Schools. At these schools the same system of physical exercises is used as in the ordinary day schools, though it is supplemented by gymnastics, and in the case of the *Shaftesbury* training ship by special drills with cutlasses, rifles and a field gun. At all these schools there is plenty of time to give the boys



a good spell of physical exercise every day, and the results are unquestionable. Industrial School boys are by no means favourable subjects for physical training, coming, as they do in many cases, of poor stock and from the worst homes. Yet, after a few months at an Industrial School the feeblest and weediest boys begin to acquire vigour and stamina. The muscular development of some of the boys at the Highbury Truant School, where they get nearly a full hour's hard



WAND DRILL ON THE "SHAFTESBURY" TRAINING SHIP.

physical exercise every day, is quite remarkable. At the Anerley Residential School for deaf boys also a considerable proportion of the boys show very vigorous physique.

In the schools for the blind and deaf there seems to be a more general recognition of the importance of physical training, and many of these schools are now supplied with gymnasia. For the blind gymnastics are specially valuable as a means of developing nerve and confidence, and for the deaf physical exercise generally is specially important in order to counteract the

tendency to weakness of chest and a shuffling gait, which is characteristic of the deaf.

But in regard to the ordinary day school it must be said that the physical training both of boys and girls remains, in spite of some recent improvements, one of the least satisfactory features of the Board's work. The idea that the scientific development of the bodily powers is a part of the duty of the school, only less important than the training of the mind, is not yet recognised as it should be. There is still a tendency in some quarters to look upon physical exercise merely as a relief for the children from the tedium of sitting still, or as a device for relieving the mental strain of ordinary lessons, or, it may be, as a mere aid to discipline and a useful adjunct to a school concert. The truth seems to be that the exercises prescribed for the day schools are well adapted, if properly performed and chosen with intelligent reference to the varying physical capacities of the children, to secure the all-round bodily development which is the aim of scientific physical culture. But the time devoted to them is utterly inadequate, and the need for adapting bodily exercise to bodily strength has hardly yet been recognised. The customary method of classifying simply according to the school standard is as illogical as it would be to divide the school for intellectual studies according to the height or weight of the pupils. But these are matters in which there is not likely to be much improvement until educational authorities and teachers generally have a juster appreciation of the value and importance of physical culture.

There are at present two chief difficulties in the way of giving to organised physical exercise the place in the school life which its importance demands. One is the unwillingness of the teachers to part with any more of the already scanty time available for book lessons. "New subjects," they say, "are continually being added to the curriculum without others being taken away to

make room for them, and the school day is found all too short for what has to be got through." There is much force in this argument, but probably the school day might, without doing anyone any harm, be lengthened by half an hour or even an hour, provided the extra time were given to work of a semi-recreative character, such as physical exercise ought to be. The children's health should benefit rather than suffer from such an arrangement.

The second difficulty is more serious. It is the difficulty which confronts the School Board in so many phases of its work, the difficulty which arises from the extreme poverty of some of its scholars. It would be cruelty to drill for half an hour a child who had come to school without breakfast. The fine results from the physical training in the Industrial Schools are only possible because the work is founded upon good feeding and healthful conditions of living. Physical training is a poor substitute for food and air. In the poorest schools there is a prior problem to be settled before much attention can be given to physical exercises. But where reasonably healthful conditions of life are the rule, that is to say in the schools in the better-class districts, it should be easily possible to develop a race of children physically as well as mentally and morally superior to those found in the Industrial Schools.

Far more satisfactory and successful has been the work of the Board in teaching swimming. The difficulties which prevented the first Board from fulfilling its intentions in this matter have been to a very great extent removed. The number of swimming baths in the metropolis has been greatly increased, and the Board has now power to spend money on swimming, which is a recognised subject of instruction under the Education Code and may be taught during school hours. The Board has two swimming baths of its own, but most of the schools use the baths controlled by the Borough Councils. About 50,000 Board School children



DUMB-BELL DRILL AT THE HIGBURY TRUANT SCHOOL.

are receiving instruction in swimming during the summer months, and every year from 14,000 to 15,000 learn to swim.

Nor do they rest content with the ability just to keep afloat in the water. In very many schools swimming as a sport is taken up with great gusto, and large numbers of Board School children acquire a high degree of proficiency in swimming, diving and life-saving. This side of the work is very greatly stimulated by the London Schools Swimming Association, a voluntary society with which the majority of the schools teaching swimming are affiliated. The Association, of which Lord Reay is President, is the largest swimming club in the world ; it includes Voluntary as well as Board Schools, and the extent of its operations may be judged from the fact that it awards about 5000 certificates a year to scholars in affiliated schools, the degree of proficiency recognised by this certificate being ability to swim, without pause or rest, 100 yards in the case of boys and 50 yards in the case of girls. Certificates are also awarded for proficiency in life-saving drill, and to teachers for all-round efficiency and ability to teach.

The work of the Association is splendidly organised. The metropolis is divided into more than thirty districts, each of which has its branch association. Each of these branches has an annual display and competition at which contests for the boy and girl championships of the district take place. These local competitions arouse great interest in the schools and amongst the parents and friends of the children, who are attracted in great numbers to the baths when the displays take place. Then there is one great central event at which, in the presence of as many enthusiastic spectators as the largest available bath will accommodate, the local champions compete against each other. Trophies are awarded on these occasions to the best individual boys and girls under thirteen, under fifteen and under sixteen respectively, the last named ranking as the

Junior Champions of London; and to the boys' school and the girls' school which send the best teams of swimmers; also to the best boy and girl divers and to the best life-saving teams. In addition to these, and more important, perhaps, than any of them, are the competitions which go on throughout the year for the *Daily Chronicle* Shield in boys' schools and the "Fabian" Shield in girls' schools—trophies which are awarded to the schools showing the greatest success in teaching swimming; and for the *Boy's Own Paper* Shield, which is awarded to the school with the largest number of competent life-savers.

The Association is proud of the fact that it is a nursery of London swimmers, several of its boys and girls having, after they left school, distinguished themselves in other competitions. And it is still more proud to number among its young adherents several who have put their knowledge of swimming to the finest possible use, and whose names have been added to the Royal Humane Society's "Roll of Honour," for saving life from drowning. One school, the Canal Road Board School at Hoxton, has had three boys who have thus distinguished themselves and brought honour to their school.

The trophies of the L.S.S.A. are distinguished—as athletic trophies always should be, but seldom are—for artistic excellence rather than for great monetary value. It is an incidental but by no means insignificant advantage that the children should form their artistic standards by contemplation of the refined and thoughtful work of artists like Mr Walter Crane and Mr C. R. Ashbee; for the trophies are all kept in the schools, the objects of continual admiration. Happily the base "pot-hunting" spirit never enters into these contests. All the trophies are perpetual challenge trophies, and the scholar who wins one learns, in the true sporting spirit, to value the honour of having his name engraved on it, and seeing it stand in the school hall; the only

individual prizes given are medals of no very great intrinsic value.

The organisation of sports in a Board School is for several reasons a much more difficult matter than in a Secondary School. There is in the Board School no long tradition of athletics as an integral part of the school life ; there are no elder boys to be the athletic mentors and patterns of the juniors, for most of the children in Board Schools leave school at fourteen, very few indeed remaining after fifteen ; there are no playing fields except the public parks, and, worst of all, there is a chronic and almost universal lack of pocket money. Clearly, if sports are to flourish in a Board School, they must be carefully nursed by the teachers. In the earlier years of the London School Board the teachers were for the most part too intent on the struggle to bring each scholar up to the point of "passing" the Government inspector to have any spirit or energy to spare for such matters as sports. And consequently the children were restricted to such rough-and-tumble games as they might devise in the asphalted school playgrounds, the only really exciting sport being an occasional street fight with a neighbouring school.

The cult of athletics is a part—and an important part—of the humanising movement which belongs to the later history of the School Board, and of which more will be said in a later chapter. In many schools now the teachers are very keen on encouraging cricket, football and swimming, spending much time in arranging matches and competitions, coaching the young captains and umpiring at matches. Often, too, they willingly bear the financial responsibility attaching to the cricket or football club, a matter of no little anxiety sometimes in the poorer schools, where the boys can scarcely pay any subscription and have to come upon the club for travelling expenses if the match is far from home. Sometimes a swimming entertainment will provide funds for the cricket or football club, or a school

concert will be organised, or the sympathy and help of local tradesmen will be invoked ; but when other things fail, the teachers must sometimes put their hands in their own pockets. In a poor school, especially, athletics are not kept in a healthy state without a good deal of self-sacrificing effort on the part of some of the teachers.

But where such effort is made it is not unrewarded. Not only have the teachers the satisfaction of seeing the increased health and happiness of their scholars, which are the natural results of concerted exercise in the open air, but there is a large element of moral gain as well. It is as true for the children of mechanics and labourers as for the children of merchants and professional men, that manly sports, played as they should be played, tend to develop unselfishness, pluck, determination, self-control and public spirit. Observe a group of Board School cricketers after they have undergone a period of friendly supervision, and have risen to the dignity of taking part in League matches. No one quarrels about his place in the field ; they do not all insist upon bowling ; the young captain does not bawl "butterfingers" or "silly fathead" whenever a catch is missed ; the field do not yell "out, out" when a wicket falls, and the batsman bowled for a duck's egg neither shouts that "it ain't fair" nor punches the umpire. Before any seniors took interest in their cricket they probably did all these things. Now they have learned to "play the game." And the change is not a matter of cricket only ; in becoming better cricketers they have become better boys.

In some of the poorer schools, especially, football is regarded by the teachers of the elder boys as an invaluable help in their work. It may almost be said that football has been the moral salvation of some of the rougher lads, who have been won by the teacher's sympathetic interest in their sports to an allegiance scarcely anything else would have inspired.



As in the case of swimming, cricket and football have been greatly developed in the Board Schools by co-operation amongst the schools. Of the two games, football is the more generally favoured and the more thoroughly organised. Fifteen districts, covering altogether a considerably wider area than that of the London School Board, have football associations which arrange inter-school matches in their own districts, and the associations are all affiliated with the London Schools Football Association, which runs several interesting series of representative matches. Picked teams chosen to represent each district association compete against each other—the stronger associations for the “Corinthian” Shield, the gift of the Corinthian Football Club, and the weaker associations for the *Sun* Shield, which is given by the proprietors of the *Sun* newspaper. Then there is a competition in which the champion schools in each division play against each other for the “Dewar” Shield, which carries with it the proud position of champion school of London.

For several years past a very interesting match has been arranged between a team of boys representing the whole of London and a team representing the elementary schoolboys of some important provincial town. A few years ago the match was against Leeds, but the London boys always proved themselves so much the stronger that it was determined to go further afield in search of a stronger opponent. The last two years the match has been against Edinburgh, and still the London boys have been successful. The match of 1902-03 was played at Edinburgh in the presence of 10,000 spectators, the London boys winning by three goals to one. The expenses of the visiting teams are paid out of the gate money and the balance is handed to the Teachers’ Orphanage.

Cricket is organised on somewhat similar lines in certain districts of London, but as yet there is no central organisation which covers the whole ground.

The South London Association, which is probably the largest of the district associations, has been in existence since 1891 and shows many signs of vigorous life. It conducts competitions for the senior and junior championships of the divisions, handsome trophies being awarded in each case. For the senior competition all the boys must be under fifteen on May 1; in the junior section, which is intended for the weaker schools, they must be under fourteen on May 1. The matches are played on Saturday mornings, the London County Council granting the use of pitches in the parks from 10 a.m. till 1 p.m.; pitches are also available for the schools for practice from 4 p.m. till dusk on Wednesdays. Some such arrangements as these are generally made both for football and cricket. The difficulty of obtaining ground for matches and practice—one of the most serious obstacles to the development of school sports in London—is to a certain extent compensated for by the fact that the boys can play their matches at times when other clubs cannot use the ground. Several of the leading cricket and football clubs in London confer a great boon on the elementary schools by placing their grounds at their disposal on Saturday mornings.

Out of the South London Schools Cricket Association there has grown an annual athletic festival. And this is another feature of the athletic life of the schools that has been greatly developed in recent years. In most of the divisions of London in connection with the Cricket Association or the Football Association, or independent of either, the annual sports day is now a recognised institution. The School Board sanctions these festivals by granting a holiday to all the Board Schools in the division on the day of the sports. Given a fine day the local athletic ground presents a very pleasant and animated spectacle when the elementary schools are in possession. The children muster by thousands to encourage the representatives of their own schools, and parents and friends attend in

fair numbers. The programmes of these sports are almost invariably of gigantic proportions, and it speaks well for the organising ability of the teachers and the discipline of the young competitors that the programmes are got through without confusion and in anything like the scheduled time. For example, at the South London Schools sports in June 1903, there were more than 2800 entries. The most popular event of the day was the Egg and Spoon Race, for which there were 380 entries. That this does not indicate any indisposition on the part of the South London boys to enter for the more severely athletic events is shown by the fact that next in order comes the Quarter Mile Handicap with 315 entries. This race had to be run in fifteen heats, and was finally won by Charles Scragg with 2 yards start in  $61\frac{1}{4}$  seconds — not bad time for a boy of fourteen. For his prowess in this and other events Scragg was adjudged the champion of the year. In some divisions there are races for girls as well as for boys. The South London sports were confined to boys; had girls also entered in large numbers, the programme, which as it was took seven hours to carry through, would surely have broken down through sheer weight of numbers.

It would surprise and delight many old athletes who may not be familiar with School Board developments to see with what eager interest and true sporting spirit many of these Board School youngsters are taking up the sports which a generation ago were almost the monopoly of boys of a higher social grade. The old *mot* about battles being won on the playing fields of Eton needs amending to-day, for the spirit of the Eton playing fields is invading the Board School playgrounds. It is probable that the athletic performances of these elementary schoolboys would compare very favourably with those of any boys of the same age. I have before me the times of the winners in most of the races at the South London sports already referred to. I have

already mentioned Scraggs' quarter mile in  $61\frac{1}{4}$  seconds. The same boy won his heat in the 100 yards race from scratch in  $12\frac{3}{8}$  seconds, but was just beaten in the final by a boy with 8 yards start. The 220 yards was won by a boy with 6 yards start in 29 seconds, and the half mile was won in 2 minutes  $14\frac{1}{8}$  seconds, with 92 yards start, by Arthur Pitcher,



AT THE HACKNEY SCHOOL SPORTS, JUNE, 1903—THE HURDLE RACE.

a fine little runner only twelve years of age. Such performances are not to be accomplished without careful preparation and earnest effort, and the boys who mean to distinguish themselves on sports day know that they must be prepared to "scorn delights and live laborious days." For weeks before the fateful day they practise sprinting in the playgrounds and parks, take long walks, and eschew tarts and ginger beer.

It will be believed that the organisation of these great race meetings, both beforehand and on the day of the sports, involves a great deal of time and thought on the part of the teachers who interest themselves in them. The handicapping alone is no light undertaking; it is usually on the basis of age, though some districts take into consideration the size and previous performances (if any) of the children. It may be questioned whether these vast gatherings, though pleasant and inspiring spectacles, are quite the best means of developing the athletic spirit in the schools as a whole. The interest would be more widespread if individual schools or small groups of schools had their own sports day, and sent their champions only to compete at some central meeting. The aim in school sports as in school work should be to cater for those of average and inferior talents, as well as for the brilliant few.

One meeting is held every year at which the picked boys of the athletic associations compete against each other. The *Hour Glass* Cup, presented by the periodical of that name, is awarded to the district association which secures the highest number of points in three races,—100 yards, 440 yards, and 880 yards. Each association is entitled to send six competitors, of whom two run in each race.

On the whole it must be said that the voluntary effort of teachers to develop manly sports and games amongst Board School children have been attended with a very great measure of success—a success which is the more striking when contrasted with the comparative failure of the official efforts to develop physique by homeopathic doses of physical drill. There are not wanting indications that the physical condition of the children will in the future receive more attention from education authorities than it has in the past. It is high time the matter should be taken in hand, for there is much to be done before physical education in the

people's schools reaches the high level of efficiency that intellectual education has reached. The new authorities will be well advised if they seek to develop this side of their work along the double line of improving the scientific and compulsory physical culture, which forms part of the school curriculum, and increasing the facilities for the free and voluntary expression of physical energy in sports and games.

This chapter has been concerned solely with the physical training and the sports of the children in the schools, but it should not be forgotten that the Board has also carried on an important work in this direction on behalf of young people who have left the day school. Gymnastics and swimming have a place in the time table of very many of the Evening Continuation Schools, and some of them are the centres of a good deal of activity in the way of cricket, football and cycling.

## CHAPTER IX

### EVENING CONTINUATION SCHOOLS

THE strength and usefulness of the London School Board have depended very much on the way in which it has adapted itself to the real needs of London. The organisation, as we see it to-day, is not so much the embodiment of particular educational theories as the practical answer to a great many appeals for help—unspoken appeals, it may be—from many different sections of the young people of London. When one need had been met, attention was turned to another, and the path to success has constantly been by way of experiment and sometimes of failure. In no department is this more strikingly shown than in the evening school work. There have been times in the Board's history when this work has been a dismal failure. There are those who deny that even now it is anything else. But such denials, as we shall see, proceed either from ignorance or malice.

The establishment of evening schools was part of the programme which the first School Board set before itself. In the generous enthusiasm of those early days some of the members seem to have seen visions of young men and women, and people of maturer years, crowding into the Board Schools after the children had gone for the day, seeking eagerly those elements of learning which they had hitherto been denied the opportunity of acquiring. It was proposed that the curriculum of the day school should be repeated in the evening, and that, in addition, higher instruction should

be provided for those who had passed the highest standard in the day school.

These visions were never realised. The Education Code of 1872 specified eighteen as the maximum age for scholars either in day or evening schools, so that many to whom the schools might have been of the greatest service were at once shut out. The local managers and many of the Board members themselves were too much occupied with the difficult and pressing problems of the day school to give much attention to evening school work, and the young people between thirteen and eighteen showed no very ardent desire to avail themselves of the schools when they were started. So sparsely were some of the schools attended that the decision of the Board in 1873 not to open an evening school unless the number of students enrolled reached at least 40, nor to continue a school in which the average attendance fell below 20, led to the closing of many schools. In 1875 the whole thing spluttered out, and there was no more evening school work by the Board till 1882.

By that time there were many thousands of young people who had spent a year or two in an elementary school, and, having passed the age-limit for compulsory attendance, had gone out into the world with the merest smattering of education. Many such, it was hoped, would wish to improve their educational equipment; at least they should have the chance. During the first year about 9000 scholars enrolled themselves. The teaching was generally quite elementary, a reproduction, in fact, of the day school work; for though the Board allowed teachers to carry on classes in other subjects—generally modern languages and science—these classes were of the private adventure order, and the Board accepted no financial responsibility for them.

For a few years the work was very far from being successful. But from the year 1885 onwards a decided impetus was given to it by the efforts of the Recreative



Evening Schools Association. The object of the Association was to brighten the schools by introducing subjects of a more recreative character, such as would be likely to attract young men and women of a less studious temperament, or those who were tired with a hard day's work. The Board cordially welcomed these efforts, and the Association introduced, without expense to the Board, musical drill, vocal music, lantern lectures, wood carving, clay modelling, and cookery.

An Act of Parliament passed in 1890 paved the way for an important advance, by declaring that the section of the Education Act of 1870 which provided that elementary education should be the principal part of the education given in elementary schools should not apply to evening schools; and the new Education Code made several additions to the list of subjects for which grants were payable, and recognised many other subjects as suitable for teaching in evening schools. It also removed the irksome restriction which compelled a student to be examined in the "Three R's" before he could earn a grant in any other subject. It was chiefly, no doubt, owing to these changes that the number of students that year showed a greater increase on the previous year than had ever before been recorded. The Board now took the special advanced classes as well as the elementary work under its own control, and a few years later it incorporated also the more recreative work which had been carried on by voluntary effort. The Recreative Evening Schools Association then decided to abolish itself, having accomplished the work for which it came into existence, and seen its principles adopted by the London School Board.

Every session now showed a steady if not very rapid advance, until in 1898 the School Board decided to abolish fees in its evening schools, with the result that the membership of the schools was nearly doubled. The number of students enrolled advanced from 57,586 to 109,121.

And what have been the characteristics of the work during these latter years? Has there come with the increase of popularity an increase of efficiency? Has there been a reasonable return for all the money spent on the Evening Continuation Schools? Undoubtedly there is an impression in some quarters that the work is in anything but a satisfactory condition. This impression is no doubt in part a legacy from the days when the evening school work was carried on on much narrower lines and with very meagre results. But still more it is due to the attacks which have been made upon the work in Parliament and elsewhere. In the long political campaign against the School Board system which has now culminated in the destruction of that system, the evening school work of the London Board formed one of the strategic points against which the enemies' attacks were most fiercely directed. The classical instance is to be found in a speech delivered in the House of Commons on July 8, 1901, by Sir John Gorst, who was then Vice-President of the Committee of Council on Education. Readers of that speech might well suppose that the evening school work of the London School Board was nothing but a costly and pretentious sham; that the numbers of students were much smaller than the School Board returns made out, and that even those numbers were only obtained by enticing students from worthier institutions; that the education given was unworthy of the name ("cheap and shoddy" was Sir John's expression), and that for the most part the time was spent in dancing and other light recreative occupations.

The Evening Continuation Schools Committee of the Board took the unusual course of appending to their report for the session 1901-02 a memorandum in reply to some of Sir John Gorst's allegations. It was shown that the Vice-President was wrong in supposing that a student entering for more than one subject at the same school would be registered as more than one student;

that the "mad competition on the part of the London School Board" did not prevent an increase in the total number of students at Polytechnics and Schools of Art; that the "cheap and shoddy" education was very favourably reported on by the Government inspectors and earned high grants, and that the percentage of passes in Science and Art subjects was higher in the London Board's evening schools than in England and Wales as a whole, and very little lower than in the London Polytechnics; that the bulk of the work done in the Evening Continuation Schools consisted of instruction in subjects recognised and paid for under the Code, and that such experiments as had been made to render the schools more attractive were in conformity with the suggestions of the Education Department itself.

It may be admitted that there was some slight ground for the fear that the competition of the Board's evening schools would weaken existing institutions. In the session 1898-99, when the Board Schools were first made free, the attendance at some of the Schools of Art fell off a little. But the attendance at nearly all the Polytechnics increased, and the Schools of Art more than recovered their position in the following session, 1899-1900. While, therefore, it is easy to understand the apprehensive frame of mind in which the organisers of Polytechnics and Schools of Art watched the development of evening school work under the Board, it is not easy to justify on public grounds the attitude of hostility to the School Board which some of them took up—an hostility which did much to strengthen the hands of the Government in its anti-School Board campaign. On the other hand the School Board would have been well advised if, in carrying out its progressive policy, it had shown a more sympathetic recognition of the institutions already in the field and had made some attempt to co-operate with them. In face of the utter inadequacy of all efforts that have yet been made in

London in the direction of secondary education, rivalry between educators is as foolish and regrettable as rivalry between missionaries in a heathen land. There is more than enough work for all for many a long day. As for the allegation that the work is chiefly of a light recreative character, a visit to two or three typical evening schools would effectually dispel that notion, even without reference to statistics and reports.

Can we then conclude that everything is quite satisfactory? The Rev. Stewart D. Headlam, the Chairman of the Evening Schools Committee, who has stamped his individuality to a remarkable degree upon this part of the Board's work, and to whom many of the developments of recent years are directly due, recognises as clearly as anyone that no such claim can be made. In a statement relating to the work of the 1901-02 session, Mr Headlam, adverting to the number of entries in certain subjects, says: "I am pleased with the figures I have quoted to you; but I am by no means satisfied with them; whatever the new authority may be, it will have, if it does its duty, to improve upon them largely." The pleasure which falls short of complete satisfaction is the sane attitude towards many aspects of evening school work, and indeed of School Board work generally. The victories of the past are magnificent, but there are many battles still to be fought before the campaign for a thoroughly satisfactory system of education, primary and secondary, is finished.

I am dealing very little in figures, because statistics are among the least illuminating factors in the story of the School Board's work, and in regard to evening schools the figures are specially liable, without elaborate explanations, to lead to wrong conclusions. Mr Headlam, however, gives some percentages which are specially instructive, and of which the significance is easily grasped. Taking the census returns for 1901, and comparing them with the School Board records, he finds that

while 60 per cent. of the child population in London were in the day schools of the Board during that year only 15 per cent. of the young people between the ages of fifteen and twenty-one were enrolled in the Evening Continuation Schools. Making all possible deductions for those who were continuing their education in other ways, Mr Headlam concludes that there must be an enormous population of young men and women in London who during the critical years between the ages of fifteen and twenty-one are untouched by any educational organisation, and are in no way continuing their education, which, for most of them, closed at thirteen.

This, no doubt, is not a very satisfactory state of affairs. And it has to be admitted that the case is even worse than at first sight appears. For owing to irregularity of attendance large numbers who enroll their names cannot be regarded as really effective students. The Board of Education lays down fourteen hours' instruction as the minimum for which grants will be paid. And no doubt it is a perfectly fair assumption in the great majority of cases, that a student who makes fewer than fourteen attendances during the session cannot have studied to much purpose. Taking, by way of example, three of the most popular subjects, we find that during the session 1902-03, approximately 50 per cent. of the students in book-keeping, 47 per cent. of the students in French, and 56 per cent. of the students in shorthand received fourteen or more hours' instruction. The Government grant is not allowed for less than a full hour's instruction, so that allowance must be made for students who arrive after the registers are marked, though they may be present during practically the whole of the lesson ; also for some who may attend a fair proportion of a special course of lectures, though fewer than fourteen. But after making all reasonable allowances, we should probably not be wrong in concluding that though 15 per cent. of the young people of London are enrolled at the evening schools not more

than 7 or 8 per cent. are gaining any considerable educational benefit from those schools.

This irregularity of attendance is the chief weakness of evening school work in London, and not of School Board work alone; Polytechnics and similar institutions also suffer from it, though not to an equal degree. It is due in part to a general want of educational enthusiasm in London, but more to the long hours of labour, which make regular attendance at the classes impossible for some students and exceedingly difficult for very many. The fact that such recreative subjects as gymnastics and vocal music fare no better than others in the matter of regularity of attendance would seem to indicate that it is more often want of opportunity than want of will that is responsible for the large percentage of absentees.

Within the last few years the organisation of the Evening Continuation Schools has been greatly improved by differentiating between the schools attended by different classes of people. Certain schools have been organised as Commercial Schools at which special attention is given to modern languages, book-keeping, shorthand, typewriting and commercial law; others are made Science and Art Schools, and specialise in drawing, chemistry, botany, physiology, etc. Some schools have been divided into senior and junior departments, the former consisting only of students over sixteen.

At many of the Commercial and Science and Art schools a great deal of very efficient work, much of it of an advanced character, is done, and a spirit of earnest effort characterises the students. Thus at the Queen's Road Commercial School, Dalston, to take a single example which is typical of many, about 500 out of 1000 students display sufficient earnestness to enter for examinations, many of them for more than one, and to pay £100 in examination fees. Most of the teachers are University graduates, and two of them are

recognised University Extension lecturers. The subjects of study include nearly every modern European language. Lectures are given in French on French literature, and are followed by discussion; similar lectures on German literature are delivered one evening in German and another in English. During the session 1902-03 the students gained about 360 successes at public examinations, including medals, prizes and many certificates from the Society of Arts and the London Chamber of Commerce.

But I am not sure that it is in schools like this, among the aristocracy of School Board students, that the Board has done its best and most characteristic work. The evening schools, even more than the day schools, reflect the infinite variety of London life. While at such a school as Queen's Road, Dalston, the majority of students will be clerks, with a sprinkling of school teachers, at another school they will be mostly factory girls, who come to learn cooking, laundry work, home nursing and gymnastics; at another school we shall find chiefly labourers, costermongers, carmen, street orderly boys and errand boys, who come to school for history, drawing, gymnastics and ambulance work; another school gives special attention to the interests of policemen, who come to be coached for the examinations for sergeants and inspectors.

The work of the schools in very poor neighbourhoods, and there are many such, naturally does not reach a very high educational level. The older pupils left school at a very early age, and during the years, many or few, between the time of leaving day school and the time when the impulse came to them to try and improve their education they have been diligently forgetting the poor rudiments of scholarship they had acquired. But it would be difficult to over-estimate the value of such schools as a brightening and civilising influence in the lives of the poor. There seems to be some danger lest work of this character should

suffer under the new conditions, on the ground that it is not educational. But apart from educational results, the mere fact that large numbers of rough lads and girls come voluntarily to the schools in a quiet and orderly spirit, bent upon self-improvement, is one to rejoice the heart of the social reformer. Even though they should yield to unfavourable circumstances, prove irregular in attendance, and fail to realise their aspirations, the fact that they have cherished such aspirations means a great deal for the community.

And, after all, there is a good deal of genuine educational work done, even in the poorest schools, and many cases have come to the notice of teachers in which the poorest of unskilled workers have materially improved their position in life owing to the education and the intellectual stimulus gained at the evening schools. The following interesting letter from a pupil shows what can be done in that direction :—

“From the time of leaving day school until about four years ago, covering a period of about six years, I had, as far as I can recollect, no object in life whatever beyond the earning of a few coppers for pocket money ; and I had absolutely no idea, definite or otherwise, regarding the methods or means I should have to employ in order to support myself later on. This state of affairs was no doubt due, firstly, to my being too apathetic or illogical to think about anything at all in that direction, and, secondly, to the fact that even if I was capable of being able to think then (which I very much doubt now), the procurement of the said few coppers occupied the greater portion of my time, as, being crippled, my opportunities for earning money were very limited.

“I used to frequent the foreshore, where I could obtain one or two odd jobs by looking after the watermen’s wherries, etc., and in course of time I became the acknowledged ‘Poor Jack,’ of Greenwich Stairs—in plain language, a mudlark. . . . This distinguished and elevated social position (!), however, is not worth much, from a pecuniary point of view, in the



depths of winter ; and one night, being more than ordinarily disgusted with the smallness of my takings, I resolved to join Randall Place Evening School. . . . Whatever idea, or medley of ideas, it was that prompted me to go, it was certainly lost in the flood of ambition that swept over me during the first week's study. One dominant thought, originally inculcated by the teacher, controlled me. I would become a clerk in an office. No one can ever realise what a stupendous undertaking that appeared to me to be, and many a sarcastic laugh I indulged in at my own expense. It seemed tantamount to committing an awful crime to endeavour to become a member of such a respectable section of the community. I was ignorant, nearly twenty years of age, had no character, and also had not the slightest idea of what a clerk's duties were, excepting that I knew they used pen and ink. When April came round I was thoroughly proficient for the position of shorthand typist (certificated), and on my second application for vacancies advertised in the *Daily Telegraph*, I was granted an interview and secured the appointment. . . .

"I do not plume myself upon having achieved an extraordinary thing, inasmuch as I can now see that the attainment of my ambition was only the natural outcome of determined application and disinterested help. I simply state the fact that I have been transformed from a disreputable mudlark into a respectable and responsible clerk with some sort of a future."

One may not feel very enthusiastic about the passion for shorthand and typewriting which possesses some of the poorer lads and girls, whose general education is not good enough to enable them to fill a clerk's position with credit, and it is probable that with the majority it is physical training, the study of domestic subjects, and "the humanities"—history, literature and singing—which are most helpful to them. But there are exceptional cases, such as that quoted above, where the clerkly ambition may be wisely and advantageously fostered.

In many of the poorer schools there is one class to which a strangely pathetic interest attaches. It is the

class for those whose education has been neglected. They are mostly rough, uncouth lads and girls; they have been delicate, perhaps, in childhood, and so have been kept away from school, or they have come from country districts where the administration of the compulsory laws was inefficient, or maybe they are the victims of foolish parents whose delight it was "to do the School Board"; and with them are a few older people—men and women whose childhood was passed before the days of compulsory education. All are engaged in the most elementary lessons—reading in a child's reading book or writing big round-hand copies. It has needed a great effort for some of the bearded men and the mothers of families to come to school and admit their lamentable ignorance. Very timidly and nervously they came at first, but the teacher soon made them feel at ease, and some have confessed that they would have come years before had they known what it would be like. Middle-aged women, who never had a day's schooling in their childhood, have been moved even to tears to find themselves in school at last. The great ambition of some of the men is to read the newspaper, and women have been driven into the schools by a poignant sense of their deficiencies, when they have seen the benefits of education in their own children.

Once the ice is broken, these mature pupils often make a most gallant effort, and achieve considerable success, though the age when learning would have been easy has long passed away. They are often touchingly grateful for the help given, and some of the teachers have letters from men and women who have learned to read and write in the evening schools—ill-spelt and ill-written, perhaps, but full of expressions of gratitude, and cherished by the recipients as a father cherishes the first letters of his little child.

Naturally the need for this absolutely elementary teaching diminishes year by year, but there is still an

appreciable demand for it, especially from foreigners who wish to learn English. Several schools in the East End are almost entirely devoted to the interests of Jewish immigrants, who, as a rule, make very steady and eager pupils.

There are one or two subjects which have become, during the last few years, in some sense, specialities of the Evening Continuation Schools. One of these is English literature, which is taught in two notably interesting ways. Many classes are giving special attention to dramatic literature, and are learning to recite and act with appreciation and intelligence passages from the great dramatists—chiefly Shakespear. In connection with this work an interesting series of performances of Shakespearean plays has been given by Mr Ben Greet's company in various public halls. The plays were acted without scenery, so that there was no spectacular attraction, but the interest of the audiences—nearly all evening school pupils—was very marked. The actors were delighted with their audience, and the audience with the actors.

The other notable way in which literature is now being taught in the evening schools is by means of lectures on literary subjects given by special lecturers. Where the lecturer has had tact and sympathy, these lectures, or rather informal talks, have been remarkably successful in inducing many, whose reading had not got beyond *Tit Bits* and the halfpenny newspaper, to begin the study of the great masterpieces of English literature. A working man who attended a course of lectures on Shakespear at an East End school remarked that he had had a volume of Shakespear for years, but he was blessed if he had ever looked at it before. He was then reading it at every leisure moment, and he and his mate were always inventing circumstances by which the tragedies might have been averted. Since the lads of Bethnal Green began to be interested in Shakespear, even their expressions of

opprobrium have acquired a literary flavour. "Oh, you Hamlet's uncle" is a term of severe reproach. It has often been said, and not without truth, that Board Schools are largely responsible for the flood of base and trivial publications of our time. Another decade of evening schools should kill a good many of them.

As to the influence of the literary studies on the characters of the pupils, I cannot do better than quote the remarkable testimony of Miss Kate Warren, one of the Board's lecturers. "I have seen," she says, "the brightening of the dull faces over the descriptions of the Forest of Arden and other lovely scenes, and heard week by week the eager questioning and demand for books; and in all these schools, among boys and men, women and girls of all ages, I have never experienced any difficulty as to discipline, and have met with the greatest kindness. I have seen, too, a gradual dying out of the fist-up attitude of the one class, and the snobbish pretence, too often a characteristic of another. It is difficult to describe the genial atmosphere of a class studying the best literature for the first time, and changing by degrees, in this company, the aggressive self-assertion for an altogether pleasing and real humility. The effect of the study of the best literature on the character is inestimable. Gradually in the debates (at some of the classes the first hour is devoted to debates on literary subjects) one notices the raising of the ideals and the wider toleration springing out of a wider knowledge."

Vocal music is another subject in which the evening schools are doing specially good work. Some of the more ambitious classes have given public performances with a considerable measure of success, and choral unions have been formed of the various classes in certain districts. The Hackney and Finsbury Choral Union of Evening Continuation Schools gave a performance of the "Creation" at the Alexandra Palace on April 25, 1903. The chorus numbered 1500 voices,

and the orchestra was chiefly composed of students from the schools. The performance was well received by the public, and Mr Allen Gill, the conductor, was much pleased with the efficiency of the choir.

Drill, gymnastics and swimming, both for men and women, are also being carried on with great vigour, notwithstanding that the Government no longer give



A GYMNASTIC CLASS (QUEEN'S ROAD EVENING CONTINUATION SCHOOL).

grants for these subjects. A Board School gymnasium is now within reach of practically every young man and woman in London.

● In about 200 schools First Aid and Ambulance work is taught, in nearly all cases by qualified medical men, and Home Nursing is being taught to many of the women. Many cases have come to the knowledge of teachers in which skill acquired at the evening classes has been of the greatest service, even to the saving of life.

Although Board Schools have nothing like the facilities for club life that are to be found in Polytechnics, efforts are made in many schools to develop the social side of life. Athletic clubs of various kinds have been formed amongst the pupils in many schools, and a monthly social evening, when music and dancing are indulged in, is a very usual feature. Some schools are in the habit of finishing up each evening's work with a few minutes' dancing, but this is always an addendum to the more serious work, not a substitute for it.

Such being the scope and character of the evening school work of the London School Board, it remains to indicate very briefly the effects upon the work of recent political developments. Among these the famous Cockerton judgment may rightly be included, for although that was a judicial decision, it arose out of a distinctly political move, the surcharging by the auditor, Mr Cockerton, at the instigation of the Board's educational rivals and with the approval of the Government, of certain payments which he had sanctioned for many years. Mr Cockerton, however, had the law on his side, and the Court of Appeal decided, among other things, that the School Board had no right to expend the school fund on the instruction of persons other than children. The term "child" was not defined, but legal opinion inclined to the belief that it would not be safe to regard as a "child" anyone over fifteen years of age. Obviously, therefore, failing fresh legislation, this decision was the death blow to the whole system of Evening Continuation Schools; for it would be absurd to run evening schools merely for the few pupils who were under fifteen years of age. The abandonment of the work was, of course, not to be thought of. Not the bitterest enemy of the School Board could contemplate bringing such a calamity on London. An enabling Act was passed in August 1901, under which the County Council might empower the

School Board to carry on this work, which was now decided to be secondary education, on such terms as might be agreed between the two authorities. No difficulty was raised by the London County Council, which gave the Board practically a free hand to continue its work in its own way. But the School Board for the last two years of its existence has had to submit to the humiliation of being unable to touch one of the most important parts of its work except by kind permission of an outside body.

The work of administering the evening schools was now transferred from the Board of Education (Whitehall), which has to do with elementary education, to the Board of Education (South Kensington), which is the authority for secondary education, and new regulations were issued from the latter office. Among these was one which discontinued the recognition of the attendance of day school scholars at evening schools.

No doubt this new regulation had something to do with the falling off in numbers which characterised the session 1901-02, a falling off which followed a period of uninterrupted advance since 1888. But a more important factor in producing this result was the state of uncertainty regarding the future of evening schools which was created by the Cockerton judgment, and no doubt also the disparaging statements of Sir John Gorst, to which reference has already been made, contributed to the same end.

The figures for the session 1902-03 showed a still further falling off in the number of pupils admitted throughout the session. And this is easily accounted for by the fact that the Board of Education has decreed the ending of the system of free schools under which the great developments of the last few years have been made. It would seem, however, that the session 1902-03 was marked by more effective work and a more earnest spirit among the students than the sessions immediately preceding it. For although there was a

decrease in the number joining the schools, there was a considerable increase in the number in average attendance, and a very remarkable increase—amounting to over 37 per cent.—in the number who entered for examination.

As to the part which the fee has played in effecting the improvement which the figures suggest there may well be differences of opinion. It may fairly be said that the evening school work was improving every year and would continue to improve, fee or no fee. But no doubt the fee has had a certain steadying effect on some of the pupils. It has also operated—and this is less satisfactory—to keep away the less earnest students,—those who are with difficulty got into the schools even when the way is made quite easy. It is only fair to say that the Board of Education has shown itself desirous of preventing the fee from being a serious burden to any by allowing free education to all under sixteen years of age, and by consenting to a very low sessional fee,—1s. for ordinary schools, 2s. 6d. for Commercial Schools, and 5s. for Science and Art Schools—while the remission of the fee has been allowed altogether in the case of about seventy schools represented as being specially poor schools.

The future of evening schools is one of the most uncertain of the many uncertainties in regard to London education. It is a work in which there are vast possibilities. Though much has been done, it is so little in comparison with the immense needs of London, that the work will provide ample scope for many a long year for the highest skill and intelligence the new authority can bring to bear on it. It is a work that holds the promise of the future. Every improvement in the day school which adds interest and attractiveness to the school life of the boys and girls will make them the more willing to retain their connection with the school, after they have gone out to work. Every shortening of the hours of labour, every rise in wages and every



advance of the people in sobriety and intelligence will tell in favour of evening schools. The immediate need is that the new authority should recognise all the conditions of the problem of evening school work in London, and, taking counsel with those who have brought the work to its present stage of development, seek to carry it forward in the same broad, human spirit, though possibly by somewhat different methods.

## CHAPTER X

### THE EDUCATIONAL LADDER

THE London School Board was established to fill in the gaps—the wide and yawning gaps—in the elementary school system of London. Neither then nor at any subsequent time has it been under any legal obligation to concern itself with higher education. Yet no record of the work of the Board would be complete which left out of account its efforts to give to large numbers of its children something beyond the merest rudiments of knowledge, and to realise, in the case of the few, the great educational idea that is not inaptly expressed by the familiar phrase “an educational ladder.” That idea has been present to the minds of the most enlightened educationists ever since the Act of 1870 laid the foundations of a national system of education in England. Among the members of the first London School Board there were some who, in the midst of their Herculean task of gathering in the neglected and untaught and imparting to them the rudiments of education, saw visions of some of their young *protégés* rising step by step on the ladder of learning and taking their places at length in the highest educational institutions in the land.

Professor Huxley gave expression to these hopes in a speech he delivered at a Board meeting held on February 15, 1871, about three months after the first assembly of the Board. “He should like,” he said, “to have an arrangement considered by which a passage

could be secured for children of superior ability to schools in which they could obtain a higher instruction than in the ordinary ones. He believed that no educational system in this country would be worthy the name of a national system, or fulfil the great objects of education, unless it was one which established a great educational ladder, the bottom of which should be in the gutter and the top in the University, and by which every child who had the strength to climb might, by using that strength, reach the place for which nature intended him." A committee of the Board appointed about this time, under the presidency of Professor Huxley, to consider the curriculum of study to be adopted in the new Board Schools, devoted a paragraph in their report to the question of the higher education of the clever children. "The Elementary Education Act," they said, "does not confer upon a School Board the power of providing secondary schools, and it is silent as to the mode by which a connection may be established between the elementary and secondary schools of the country. But it is of such importance to the efficacy of popular education that means should be provided by which scholars of more than average merit should be enabled to pass from elementary into secondary schools that we feel it our duty to offer some suggestions upon the subject."

The chief recommendation of the committee was that the Board should enter into communication with the Endowed Schools Commissioners and seek to establish a system of scholarships providing maintenance grants equivalent to the earnings of children between the ages of 13 and 16, tenable for the periods during which they might remain in the secondary schools. Little came of this proposal. The School Board, of course, had no money to spend on scholarships, and the Endowed Schools Commissioners did not display any great eagerness to devote to this object any of the funds they controlled. Extensive inquiries

were made in subsequent years into the administration of various endowments, and representatives of the School Board obtained seats on the Boards of Governors of many London charities, but it was not along this road that the wished-for scholarships were to come.

At various times private individuals and public companies have placed in the hands of the School Board funds to provide scholarships for children in London elementary schools. The first of these scholarships, the Mortimer Memorial Scholarship, which was established as a memorial to Dr Mortimer, headmaster of the City of London School, was awarded in July 1873 to W. E. Barker, a pupil in a National School. The scholarship was presented, very appropriately, by Lord Lawrence, the Chairman of the School Board, at the opening of the first London Board School, the Old Castle Street School, Whitechapel.

The first scholarship holder set a most brilliant example to all who followed him, and in his case the hopes of the School Board were more than realised. Barker proceeded to the City of London School, where he gained numerous prizes and became captain of the school. He then obtained a Foundation Scholarship at Trinity College, Cambridge, and after gaining many brilliant successes at the University, was elected to a Fellowship of his college. He obtained an appointment under the Board of Trade, but unhappily died soon afterwards, on the threshold of what promised to be a career of real distinction.

But before we deal at length with the scholarship system it will be well to give some account of the extent to which the London School Board has in its own schools met the demand for something beyond a strictly elementary education—for an education, that is to say, suited to the needs of bright children of from twelve to fifteen years of age. In the early years of the School Board no such demand existed. The schools, in common with other elementary schools, were

organised in six "Standards," and it was an unusually favoured school which had more than three or four scholars in the Sixth or highest Standard. After a few years of compulsory education, the Sixth Standard naturally filled up, and a Seventh was added. In course of time even the Seventh Standard was inadequate to the needs of an increasing number of boys and girls who had passed right through the school and whose parents were willing to keep them at school a little longer than the law required. Thus there were found at the top of many of the schools considerable numbers of bright children for whom no special educational provision existed; they had simply to mark time, repeating, perhaps, the work of the previous year.

To meet this need the London School Board decided to constitute certain of its schools "Higher Standard Schools." In these schools special attention was to be paid to the work of the upper classes, which was to be carried forward as far as the age and capacity of the scholars permitted. The theory of these schools was that they should be recruited from the brightest scholars in all the neighbouring Board Schools, each Higher Standard School having a number of contributory schools allocated to it. But human nature intervened to mar the symmetry of this admirable scheme. The contributory schools failed to contribute. Head masters and mistresses, being human, preferred keeping their best scholars to recommending their transfer to another school. As a rule, therefore, the Higher Standard Schools (which afterwards came to be called Higher Grade Schools) represented not so much a new type of school as the best existing examples of the ordinary elementary school. Such superiority as they had was due to the ambition or energy of the head teachers, to the favourable social conditions of the neighbourhood, or to the fact that they were somewhat more liberally equipped and staffed.

Many of these schools, as well as some of the other elementary schools both in London and the provinces, entered scholars for the examinations of the Science and Art Department, and the grants thus gained were of considerable help to the School Boards in developing their higher grade work. In the desire to earn these grants some of the schools modelled their curriculum more and more on the Directory of the Science and Art Department, until, by a natural process, there was evolved a new type of school with a curriculum predominantly scientific. Such schools, on complying with certain conditions, were recognised as "Organised Science Schools," and it was along these lines that higher grade work in the North of England chiefly developed. In London, however, only four Organised Science Schools were started, the School Board being of opinion that such schools were not so well adapted to the educational needs of London as of the industrial centres in the North.

Nevertheless the higher grade work developed in London as elsewhere, fostered and encouraged by the Education Department, which, under Mr Acland, showed itself very sympathetic to every movement for raising the level of popular education. The development, however, was not to go on without opposition. As the higher grade work of the Board increased in extent and efficiency, the opposition and dislike which it inspired in certain quarters became more and more articulate. Representatives of Voluntary Schools, who could not hope to emulate the higher grade work of the School Boards until they could obtain the right to dip into the ratepayers' pockets, and representatives of secondary schools and institutions, who saw in this higher grade work an encroachment by the School Boards upon their own special domain, gained the ear of the Government. Such at any rate is the most probable explanation of the complete change which came over the administration of the Education De-

partment. The fear that Higher Grade Board Schools would compete with secondary schools to the injury of the latter was not really well founded. Individual cases of such injurious competition might no doubt be found, but one of the fundamental facts about these Higher Grade Schools is that, whatever their curriculum, they are in essence primary schools ; their pupils are elementary school children, of whom not one in a hundred would, in the absence of such schools, attend a secondary school. So that the closing down of the higher grade work of the School Boards would simply result in depriving thousands of bright children between the ages of fourteen and fifteen and a half of any education whatever.

The full story of higher elementary education in London, and of the relations between the Government and the School Board on this subject, is far too long and complex to be related here. But there are two matters of outstanding interest and importance to which brief reference may be made. These are the famous Cockerton judgment and the establishment of a new type of school, known as the Higher Elementary School.

When Mr Cockerton, the auditor of the Local Government Board, surcharged certain payments of the London School Board, on the ground that they were not for elementary education, the only matter on which the School Board had power to expend the school fund, he raised a question of vital consequence to the future of popular education. It is true that the auditor had for many years passed without challenge precisely similar payments to those which now, acting of course under instructions, he surcharged, and that the Education Department had in previous years cordially approved the alleged illegal practices. But the judges, of course, when the case was brought before them by the School Board, could only interpret the law as they found it, and the decision of the Court

of Appeal was to the effect that a School Board could only spend public money on the elementary teaching of children. The judges did not define, any more than the Acts of Parliament had defined, what is "elementary education," and what is "a child." But it was held that anything which came within the Whitehall Code (the Code governing elementary schools) might be taught to children, but nothing lying outside that Code. The effects of the Cockerton judgment on evening schools and pupil teachers' schools are touched on elsewhere. One of its chief effects on the Higher Grade Schools was to confirm a recent decision of the Education Department to cut off such schools from participation in the grants of the Science and Art Department. Henceforward the Science and Art Department, or, as it is now called, the Board of Education (South Kensington), was to have nothing to do with elementary schools. This meant the extinguishing of the Schools of Science, which depended almost entirely upon South Kensington for their grants. As to the question "What is a child?" the Education Department has indicated its view by declining to pay grants for any scholar over fifteen years of age.

Before the Cockerton case was decided, the Board of Education issued a Minute making provision for the establishment of Higher Elementary Schools, at which grants might be earned in some measure proportionate to the increased cost of the higher education. The School Board was delighted, and at once made application for the recognition of the existing Higher Grade Schools (seventy-nine departments in all) as Higher Elementary Schools. But it soon became evident that the Board of Education had no intention of promoting higher elementary education in London in this wholesale way. It refused in some cases to sanction Higher Elementary Schools on the ground that they were not needed in the neighbourhood, meaning probably that the district was well supplied with secondary schools, and the only



schools it did sanction were such as had a predominantly scientific curriculum and were able to comply with very rigid restrictions as to the size of the school, equipment, staffing, etc. The new type of school in fact turned out to be the old Science School under another name.

The upshot of much correspondence between the Board and the Education Department was that three of the old Science Schools and four other schools were recognised as Higher Elementary Schools. That is to say, the provision for higher elementary education in London, so far as it is recognised by the Government, amounts to one school for every 700,000 of the population. The inadequacy of such provision is too obvious to need pointing out. Whatever else has been done by the London School Board in the direction of higher education has been done without Government encouragement and support, and entirely at the cost of the ratepayers. For the Higher Grade School is not recognised as such in the education codes; it receives nothing beyond the ordinary elementary school grants.

Nevertheless the Higher Grade Schools are being gradually approximated in character to the Higher Elementary Schools. From the child's point of view it makes little difference whether he attends a Higher Elementary or one of the best of the Higher Grade Schools. In both the bulk of the children, if not all, are above the Fourth Standard; in both there is a well-considered curriculum calculated to develop the powers of the scholars in many directions and to give them plenty to do till they reach the age of fifteen or fifteen and a half; in both the equipment is on a more lavish scale than in the ordinary school; in both the classes are small, so as to allow a greater degree of individual attention, and—which is perhaps the most important consideration of all—the staff is exceptionally strong, often including two or three University graduates, and

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being strengthened by visiting specialists for languages and art.

Having thus explained the distinction between the two types of school, we may for convenience include both under the one name—Higher Grade Schools. But it must be premised that some of the Higher Grade Schools hardly deserve the name, being nothing but ordinary elementary schools with one or more classes



A PRACTICAL CHEMISTRY CLASS (MONTEN STREET HIGHER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL).

doing higher grade work; the mass of the scholars go through the ordinary standards and nothing more, while a small percentage of the brightest children are taken through a special course and enabled to compete for scholarships.

It is no doubt partly for this reason that the system of contributory schools has not been more successful. In some districts a teacher may say with much plausibility that a child will be no better off at the neighbouring Higher Grade School, and therefore he does not

feel called upon to advise his removal. The Board has lately made greater efforts to make the system of contributory schools a reality. Head teachers are instructed to submit annually a certain percentage of the scholars in their higher classes for the entrance examination to the Higher Grade School. But this after all only amounts to taking the horse to the water. The problem of making him drink presents greater difficulties. Children cannot be compelled to attend any particular school; parents, knowing as a rule nothing about educational matters, take the advice of the teachers; and teachers are not easily to be induced to give advice tending, as they think, to their own hurt.

Thus it happens that as yet there is no really effective system in London of transfer from the lower grade of Board School to the higher. One of the largest schools in London, a school of about 600 boys, which is supposed to be fed by seven neighbouring schools, received as the result of a recent examination an accession of thirteen scholars, and this was more than double the number of any previous year. Perhaps this is an extreme instance; but I doubt whether there is a single Higher Grade School in London in which the theory of such schools—that they are to afford a higher education for the brightest children of the neighbouring schools—is thoroughly carried out in practice. Before the system becomes a really effective means of continuing the education of great numbers of children in the elementary schools, the difference between the Higher Grade and the ordinary school will have to become more defined; the Higher Grade Schools must be restricted to elder scholars, and the staffing and equipment of all must be brought up to the level of the best. When this is done, the Higher Grade School may come to be regarded by teachers and parents as a distinct type of school to which great numbers of children will pass in the normal course of events on reaching the age of ten or eleven.

The high-water mark as regards building and equip-

ment has been reached in the Higher Grade School at Cassland Road, Homerton, which was opened in 1902. The building is designed for a mixed school of about 800 pupils, all of whom are to be above Standard V. It is perfectly ventilated on the "plenum" system, by which the air in every part is changed every four minutes, and the lighting is by electricity. On the lower floors are a large hall, with numerous bright, light classrooms and the usual offices. The top floor is occupied by what may be described as the special features of the school—a large, well-lighted art-room fitted with adjustable desks, a modelling-room furnished with easels and stands for clay modelling, a large and splendidly equipped chemical laboratory—the largest in any London Board School, and one of which any secondary school might be proud—a physical laboratory with a good equipment of appliances for practical work, a balance-room supplied with the most delicate balances, a lecture-room with seats rising in tiers, facing a demonstration table and a sheet for lantern illustrations, a needlework-room fitted with tables for cutting out and a gas stove for ironing, and finally a large, well-equipped gymnasium with separate dressing-rooms for boys and girls adjoining. And all this for nothing a week! What a contrast with the elementary schools of the pre-School Board era, or even with the first schools built by the London School Board!

But perhaps the contrast in the work done in the schools is even more striking. The early Board Schools could concern themselves with very little more than the "Three R's," and if the children in the highest classes could read fluently, write a bold, clear hand, solve simple arithmetical problems, and perhaps answer a few easy questions in geography, they were held to have done well and reflected credit on their preceptors. To-day we find in the highest classes at the Higher Grade Schools boys and girls who are well grounded in chemistry, in sound, light and heat, in electricity and

magnetism, in physiology and botany (not each pupil in all these branches of science but each in several of them), and whose knowledge is based on the soundest of all foundations—their own investigations and experiments in the laboratories. In French (or German, if that is the selected language for study) they can translate passages from classical authors from and into



A DRAWING CLASS (MONTM STREET HIGHER ELEMENTARY SCHOOL).

the foreign language, write from dictation and converse with considerable fluency. The ground-work has been laid by the ordinary staff, and a native teacher attends to put the finishing touches. The French master, we notice, conducts his lesson entirely in French, and a member of the school staff is present the while, watchful though silent, for with all the changes of the years, boys are still boys. In the art-room the niggling little outline copies of the early days have been discarded ;

the children practise bold, free-hand drawing with chalk, model drawing from casts and common objects, geometrical drawing, and colour work; flowers and plants are painted from nature, and then the natural forms are arranged to fill a space, and some idea is gained of the principles of design as applied to the crafts. In mathematics four or five books of Euclid, Algebra up to quadratic equations, and elementary trigonometry are within the range of the most advanced pupils. English literature and history are also studied, though not, I think, to such good purpose as the scientific subjects.

But probably the most hopeful feature about this higher grade work is not so much the actual extent of the curriculum, as the spirit in which the work is done, the appetite for learning which it evokes. The rudimentary education of the early days only led in many cases to an ignorant self-satisfaction; the more advanced education of to-day leads the pupil to the point of realising the littleness of his own knowledge and wishing to increase it. In the old days the boy who had mastered decimal fractions thought he had finished his education; to-day the boy who sees the binomial theorem looming ahead of him knows that he is but beginning. Many boys and girls before they leave the Board Schools become—not paragons of learning, but keen students, and the interest some of them take in their work while at school is the best possible assurance that they will continue their studies, as far as they have opportunity, after they leave school. At one school I heard of a class which petitioned to be allowed to come and continue a certain interesting course of study on two days when the school was closed for an examination, and at the same school a small reference library provided by the teachers is continually consulted by the boys in their spare time for their own purposes. At another school the boys throw themselves with zest into the production of a manuscript magazine; at another they

hold weekly debates, under the guidance of one of the masters, and at one of these I have heard the arguments for and against Free Trade stated with a clearness and force that would not have disgraced politicians of much riper years.

In London the unsympathetic attitude of the Education Department and a certain timidity on the part of the School Board have prevented the higher grade work from reaching so high a general level as in some provincial towns. There is no London Board School with so fine a record as the Leeds Central Higher Grade School, which, before it passed from the control of the Leeds School Board, was able to boast that ninety-three of its pupils had passed the Matriculation Examination at London University and sixty-five of its old scholars had obtained University degrees. Yet it may be said that the London system of Higher Grade Schools, with all its defects, has succeeded — Mr Cockerton notwithstanding — in giving thousands of London children an education which passes considerably beyond what is generally understood by “elementary” and which places them many rungs higher on the educational ladder than would once have been thought possible.

It has been suggested that many scholars from the Board Schools—the Higher Grade Schools especially—continue their education to some extent in after life by private reading or attendance at evening classes. But some few are enabled to do so in a more definite and effective way by means of scholarships. Those members of the first School Board who cherished the generous ambition of seeing their brightest children rising step by step, with the aid of successive scholarships, till they reached the universities, must have been somewhat disappointed at the slowness with which offers of scholarships reached them. By the time the first Board went out of office in November 1873, there were only three scholarships under the Board’s control.

The number slowly increased, and up to Christmas 1903 the School Board had awarded altogether 789 scholarships, of which 417 went to boys and 244 to girls from Board Schools, and 100 to boys and 28 to girls from non-Board Schools. But even this number is a mere drop in a bucket, when it is remembered that during those thirty years the children who passed through the elementary schools of London were numbered by millions. It is interesting to notice that, during the first few years, nearly all the scholarships were won by children in Voluntary Schools, but gradually the Board Schools asserted their superiority, and for many years by far the greater number of scholarships have gone to Board School children.

Regarded as a link with the universities, these scholarships have not been entirely successful. The brilliant success of W. E. Barker, the first holder of a School Board Scholarship, was not repeated by many who followed him. The scholarships provided for education at a secondary school between the ages of thirteen, or thereabouts, and sixteen or seventeen, and the majority then left school and obtained situations in the commercial world or the Civil Service, greatly helped thereto by their superior education but without having accomplished anything remarkable in a scholastic sense. A few, however, by winning further scholarships, were enabled to remain at school longer and then proceed to Oxford or Cambridge. From the somewhat incomplete records, which have been kept at the School Board offices, of the after careers of scholarship holders, it appears that one became a magistrate in India, another classical master in a Dublin high school, another assistant mistress in a girls' high school and lecturer on scientific subjects for the London School Board, one or two became ministers of religion, but the majority have been lost sight of in the great world of commerce.

Within the last ten years a system of scholarships which goes much farther in the direction of establishing



a really effective educational ladder for London children has been established by the Technical Education Board of the London County Council. Every year the Council gives about 600 Junior Scholarships, about 100 Intermediate, and seven or eight Senior Scholarships. Six hundred scholarships a year may seem at first sight a fairly good allowance for London's elementary schools, but after all it is less than one scholarship for two schools. What would be large elsewhere becomes small in London. Nevertheless the scholarships now available for London's children are sufficiently numerous to familiarise them and their teachers with the idea of a scholarship as an object of reasonable ambition.

In devising its scholarship scheme the Technical Education Board has evidently been influenced by the fascinating idea of the ladder. The three grades of scholarship cover the whole period of education from the Board School to the University. The Junior Scholarships are awarded to boys and girls under thirteen years of age, and about 95 per cent. of them are won by children in Board Schools. They enable the scholar to continue his education for two years at a secondary school, or at a Higher Grade Board School approved by the Council, and in addition to paying the school fees, if any, provide a maintenance allowance of £8 for the first year and £12 for the second year. In certain cases the Junior Scholarship may be extended slightly beyond the two years. These scholarships are only awarded to children whose parents are in receipt of less than £150 a year, and the idea of the maintenance grant is to compensate parents to some extent for the wages their children might obtain if they left school.

The actual educational value of the Junior Scholarship in itself is not very great. Now that the age of compulsory attendance has been raised to fourteen, it only prolongs the child's school life for a year at the most. It is true that the holder has the option of

attending a secondary school for the two years. But it is questionable whether the boy or girl who must leave school at fifteen does not get a better education by remaining at a Higher Grade Board School, and continuing the School Board course to the end, than by starting on a new course of education which he will not pursue long enough to reach any definite goal. However this may be, the option disappears under the provisions of the new Act. The provision dissociating scholarships from the work of public elementary schools will, unless some subsequent modification is introduced, prevent any scholarship being held in a Board School. That being so, it is most desirable that the period covered by the scholarships should be extended to three years, so as to enable the scholars to get real educational benefit from their sojourn at the secondary school.

As things now are the Junior County Scholarship best fulfils its purpose when it becomes the stepping-stone to a higher scholarship. The Intermediate Scholarships, which are open to any boys and girls under sixteen years of age, whose parents are in receipt of less than £400 a year, provide educational fees in an approved secondary school, with maintenance grants averaging £27, 10s. a year until the scholar reaches the age of eighteen—with extensions in special cases. These scholarships have had considerable influence on the Higher Grade Schools: they mark the goal of School Board studies. The highest class in the Higher Grade Schools usually contains several scholars who are working for these scholarships, and the school curriculum is naturally to some extent coloured by this circumstance. The competition for these valuable scholarships is very keen, and a perusal of the examination papers would open the eyes of those who think the Board Schools exist only for teaching the "Three R's." In this competition scholars from Board and secondary schools compete on

equal terms, and it is interesting to note that at the examination in June 1903, 22 out of the 70 scholarships awarded to boys, and 23 out of the 30 awarded to girls, were won from the Board Schools. The difference in proportion is rather striking, and may perhaps be some indication of the relative efficiency of secondary schools for boys and for girls.

Another point of interest arising out of the lists of successful candidates is that 61 of the 100 Intermediate Scholarships were awarded to boys and girls who had previously obtained Junior County Scholarships. This is a very satisfactory feature of the competition, for it shows that the scholarships are proving a real ladder, and helping forward the education of those who most need help, the children of parents earning less than £3 a week.

The Senior County Scholarships are, of course, only for the very few. They are awarded not on the results of an examination but with reference to the past work and future promise of the scholars. They enable a few promising scholars to attend a university or institution of university rank and, in addition to tuition fees up to £30 a year, they carry with them a maintenance allowance of £60 a year for three years. In addition to the Senior County Scholarships the Technical Education Board awards several exhibitions of smaller value, which help promising and needy scholars to pursue their studies at the universities.

Thus the L.C.C. scheme of scholarships is proving the best means yet in existence for enabling the clever boy or girl to climb up from the Board School to the University. If the Junior County scholar wins an Intermediate Scholarship, and if the Intermediate scholar wins a Senior County Scholarship, or some other entrance scholarship to the University, the ladder is complete. But those are two rather big "ifs"; the chances of success diminish at each step, the ascent

becomes more and more difficult, and it is only a small minority who reach the summit.

Nevertheless each class of scholar has gained a real benefit, and become able to do better work, if not to fill a more lucrative position, than he would have done



*Photo. by]*

*[Scott & Wilkinson, Cambridge.*

MR E. CUNNINGHAM, SENIOR WRANGLER, 1902.

without a scholarship. While of those who have reached the universities, there have been some very gratifying successes recorded.

The most notable scholastic success yet achieved by a London County Council scholar is that of Mr E. Cunningham, who was Senior Wrangler in 1902. Cunningham began his education at the Canal Road

Board School, Hoxton. He afterwards attended the Crouch End Board School, from which school he obtained an entrance scholarship at Owen's School, Islington. While at Owen's School he obtained an Intermediate County Scholarship, which he held for two years. He then gained the first open Mathematical Scholarship at St John's College, Cambridge, and was awarded a grant of £50 a year for three years (afterwards renewed for a fourth year) by the Technical Education Board of the L.C.C. This grant, together with the St John's College Foundation Scholarship, and an exhibition from Owen's School, enabled him to maintain himself at Cambridge while pursuing his studies to such good purpose.

From among many other University successes recorded to the credit of Board School boys and girls holding County Council Scholarships, two recent successes by girl students may be mentioned. Both in 1902 and 1903, the Clothworkers' Scholarship of £60 a year for natural science at Girton College, Cambridge, which is awarded on the result of a competition open to all England, has been won by a former scholar of a London Board School. In 1902 the successful scholar was Miss Ellen Delf, a former pupil of Goodrich Road Board School; in 1903 the successful scholar was Miss Mabel Gardner, who began her education at Gipsy Road Board School. Both girls on gaining Junior Scholarships went to the James Allen's School, Dulwich, where in due course they gained Intermediate Scholarships and afterwards the Girton Scholarships. Of the career of L.C.C. scholars after leaving college it is too soon to speak, as this scholarship scheme has only been in operation since 1894.

It is clear then that the "educational ladder" has become a reality in London; but it is only for the very few that the higher rungs exist. Many more scholarships are wanted, if all the boys and girls in the elementary schools are to have a chance of developing

to the full any great natural abilities with which they may be endowed. For it is certain that to give opportunities for such development is the soundest civic and national economy. There is no waste more lamentable than the waste of brains, and the nation which knows its true wealth will seek to develop and utilise the brain power of its citizens. The examples quoted are but indications of a great national asset, as yet but partially developed, that is to be found in our elementary schools.

A few years ago there came into an East End Board School a Jewish boy of eleven years of age, an alien immigrant, speaking but little English. According to his age he should have been in the Fifth or Sixth Standard. But he was very backward, and the master could only put him in the Second Standard. In twenty months that boy had reached the Sixth Standard, and in 1903 his name appeared in the list of Wranglers at Cambridge. Could any policy be more wasteful and short-sighted than one which would leave undeveloped and untrained such great natural gifts as that boy possessed?

On the heels of those who are achieving distinction at the universities there follows another generation who are at present in the secondary schools of London. In these schools there are to-day hundreds of ex-Board School scholars, some of whom are recognised as among the most brilliant pupils in their respective schools. At a Board School in a poor neighbourhood—a mixed school—the headmaster told me that one of his old boys had won the gold medal awarded to the best all-round boy at a famous secondary school, and that at the same time another old pupil was holding the position of head girl at a secondary school for girls.

Of Board School boys who, in other fields than those of scholarship, have made their way to good and even brilliant positions their name is legion, though the records of such successes only now and again come to

light. The head of a financial firm of world-wide reputation, who lives in a mansion in Mayfair, passed through the standards in a Whitechapel Board School, and it is pleasant to know that he still takes an interest in his old school, sending ten guineas every year towards the cost of a day in the country for the children.

If so much has been done in the past by the pupils of the people's schools, in spite of all restrictions of opportunity, it seems reasonable to expect that with wider opportunities the record of the future will be even better. Every addition to the number of scholarships available adds to the number of bright children who will have their chance to make the most of their lives for themselves and for the community.

It is true that the scholarship system under present conditions has disadvantages as well as advantages. The practice of awarding scholarships on the results of competitive examinations inevitably leads to cramming, it penalises the nervous child and gives an unfair advantage to a few favourably situated schools. The Higher Grade Schools, with their larger proportion of scholars in the highest classes and their superior equipment and staffing, can give special attention to scholarship work, and naturally gain the bulk of the successes. But it does not seem inevitable that the competitive examination system should be retained. The award of the Junior L.C.C. Scholarships at any rate might be made on the results of the ordinary school work and without a special examination.

Another desirable development is the establishment of a system of scholarships into the professions. The position of a young man who leaves school at eighteen or nineteen on the expiration of his Intermediate Scholarship, or who leaves college three or four years later after taking his degree, is often one of much difficulty and perplexity. Lacking the golden key which unlocks the door of the professions, he may be

forced into some calling which offers little scope for his abilities. Very few School Board boys have become doctors, and I have not found any record of one having been called to the Bar. Yet probably there have been some scholars in the London Board Schools who, if they had had the chance, would have become great surgeons or great lawyers. There may be some such in the schools to-day. Should they not have their chance?

But the development of all others for which the time is ripe and the need urgent is not so much in the direction of catering for the few exceptional boys and girls as for the great mass of those who are capable of receiving and profiting by a somewhat higher degree of education than they now receive. The system of Higher Grade Schools provides the machinery for such education, but it needs to be further organised and developed. Admission to these schools from the ordinary elementary school must be made not an exceptional proceeding, but the normal and usual course for all the brightest children of ten or eleven years of age. And when they reach the Higher Grade School they must be kept there till they are fifteen, and as many as possible till sixteen. A further raising of the age for compulsory attendance may not be practicable or desirable, and in the present state of popular ideas parents would need some inducement to keep their children at school longer than they are obliged. The inducement might be found in a large system of scholarships or exhibitions of small amount, which might compensate to some extent for the loss of the probable earnings of the scholar between the ages of fourteen and sixteen. The Higher Grade Schools would thus fill a definite and important place in the educational system without competing with the present secondary schools, which would still receive their complement of scholarship winners bent on reaching the higher rungs of the educational ladder.

It is a pity that now and again a Lord Chancellor



*in posse* should have to content himself with a clerkship in a solicitor's office, but it is an infinitely greater pity that tens of thousands of lads and girls should every year be turned out of our London schools at the age of fourteen, to be subject for the two or three most impressionable and formative years of their lives to influences which, if not positively harmful, are certainly not educational. Before they have learned to apply their knowledge to useful ends, and before there has been kindled in them a love for literature, for art, for scientific research, or for any other ennobling pursuit, they close their school books—probably for ever. To keep 100,000 London children at a good school till they are sixteen would be an even greater achievement than to gain for a few hundreds admission to the universities and the professions—even as an army of stalwart men is a finer thing than an army of dwarfs with a sprinkling of giants. Nothing would more surely tend to raise the intellectual and moral level of the community; and it is to be hoped that, among the many problems demanding the attention of the new authority, this of extending the school life of great numbers of the children will find a prominent place.

## CHAPTER XI

### TEACHERS AND THEIR TRAINING

THE status of the teaching profession is a very fair criterion of the degree of educational enlightenment to which a community has attained. In the dark days before 1870 elementary school teaching, though then, as always, the chosen calling of many men and women of culture and intellectual power, was also in too many instances the refuge of the incompetent, the last resort of those who had failed in other walks of life. We have travelled far since then, but it will not be until we are as proud of our school-houses as of our ships of war, and as willing to spend money on school furniture as on Maxim guns, that the schoolmaster will take that place in society which the important and sacred character of his work demands. We have already seen (Chapter III.) that one of the great difficulties of the first School Board was the scarcity of competent teachers—a direct result of the low estimate of the teacher's office which had hitherto prevailed. That difficulty has not even yet been entirely overcome, nor is likely to be until mean ideas entirely cease to rule in our educational arrangements.

In the absence of any other method of obtaining trained teachers for their schools, the early School Boards had perforce to adopt a system which was in general use long before 1870, and which still remains the most usual channel through which teachers enter our elementary schools—the pupil teacher system. It was a wretched expedient in the early days, but the

London School Board has done a very great deal to make it respectable and effective, though even to-day it falls far short of perfection as a means of filling the schools with efficient teachers.

The lot of a pupil teacher in the early days of the School Board was anything but an enviable one. On leaving the elementary school, generally about the age of thirteen, he was bound apprentice to the School Board for five years, and at once went to work in one of the day schools, teaching the younger children or helping an assistant teacher with a large class. These duties occupied the whole of the school day, but the pupil teacher had also to continue his own studies in order to qualify for entry to a training college at the end of his apprenticeship. He was entitled to an hour's instruction daily from the head teacher, and his evenings naturally had to be spent in private study.

It is difficult to understand how so enlightened a body as the first or the second London School Board could have adopted or sanctioned a system which condemned the young teachers to toil like galley slaves, and gave even a modified share in the training of young children into the hands of boys and girls of thirteen or fourteen years of age. But it must be remembered that the School Board did not initiate the system; it simply adopted the system which was universal throughout the country, and which, with all its deficiencies, was a great advance on the grotesque monitorial system it superseded.

It is not necessary to detail the successive steps which have been taken to increase the efficiency of the instruction given to pupil teachers and to lessen the severity of the strain involved in the double work of teaching and studying. It will be sufficient to explain the present stage of development, premising that this stage has been reached by a gradual progress, and that it is itself but a halting-place on the road to a more perfect system.

At the present time a boy or a girl in an elementary school, who wishes to become a pupil teacher under the London School Board, may, after reaching the age of fourteen and being favourably reported upon by his or her head teacher, sit for the entrance examination for probationers held annually in May. On passing the examination, the boy or girl is entered at a pupil teachers' school and also at an ordinary school where there is a vacancy for a young pupil teacher. The whole period of training is about four and a half years. For the first three months the probationer attends the pupil teachers' school for five half days in the week and the day school to which he is attached for the other five half days of the school week. For the next nine months he spends the whole of his time at the pupil teachers' school, becoming in fact a regular day scholar again. The object of breaking in upon the student life at such an early age with a period of service in the day school is that the head teacher may have an opportunity of seeing whether the young probationer gives promise of making a good teacher. Practically, however, it cannot be said that this object is really attained. Head masters and mistresses are not willing to check a young teacher's career at the very outset by an adverse report, and as the probationer is too young to be of any real use in the school, the time he spends there is to a great extent wasted.

After the probationary period, the boy or girl, on passing an entrance examination for pupil teachers, is apprenticed for three years, receiving during that time a small but progressive salary, amounting in the third year to £30 in the case of boys and £24 in the case of girls. All pupil teachers attend half the week at the pupil teachers' school and half the week at the day school to which they are attached.

The system of gathering pupil teachers to a specially equipped, and in some cases specially built, centre for

careful and well-organised teaching is, of course, an immense improvement on the old haphazard system of leaving the instruction of the pupil teachers to the head teachers of the schools in which they worked. At the pupil teachers' schools the teachers are men and women of exceptionally high qualifications, the majority of them being University graduates. The curriculum is not unlike that of the modern side of a secondary school, though naturally it is determined to a great extent by the requirements of the King's Scholarship examination, the entrance examination to the training colleges. The goal of the pupil teachers' school, however, is a little beyond the King's Scholarship examination—namely, the Matriculation examination at London University. From one of the centres alone, that at Offord Road, Barnsbury, twenty-one students passed the Matriculation examination in June 1903. King's Scholarships are awarded without further examination to students who matriculate.

The training of pupil teachers is one of the matters on which, according to the Cockerton judgment, the School Board has no right to expend the school fund, although it has been doing so ever since it came into existence. The work, therefore, has lately been carried on under an enabling Act. But all developments in the way of additional buildings were for the time being stopped; in fact, a half-finished building in north-west London, which was to have been a new pupil teachers' school, was left standing at the stage it had reached when the Cockerton thunderbolt fell, awaiting the advent of an education authority which should not be dependent on the forbearance of its enemies for permission to do its most necessary work.

The last pupil teachers' school erected under the London School Board is that at Offord Road, which just escaped the Cockerton judgment. The building is well equipped and admirably suited for its purpose. On the ground floor is a large hall with a number of

classrooms leading from it ; the first floor is practically a duplication of the lower one, the hall in this case being furnished with desks for use as a classroom or at examinations. On the second floor are well-equipped chemical and physical laboratories, a lecture-room with demonstration table, a well-lighted art-room and a modelling-room. In the basement are the gymnasium, dining-room and kitchens. The association of the young people at centres for purposes of study is in every way healthy and desirable. Apart from the vastly increased educational advantages which are thus obtained, there is a social life at the pupil teachers' centre, which must be brightening and stimulating in its effects.

And what of the other side of the pupil teacher's training—the practical work in the day school? This undoubtedly is the weak side of the system. The pupil teacher is placed under the charge of the head master or mistress, whose duty it is to supervise his work and report upon it. He has not a class of his own, but helps the assistants in the conduct of their classes, and also prepares notes of lessons and delivers a certain number of specimen lessons in the presence of the head teacher, who criticises his methods. The pupil teacher therefore has very little responsibility, and is in the position of a learner during the whole time of his training. That, no doubt, is a wise arrangement in the interests of the children, if not of the pupil teacher himself; and if it should happen that the head teacher is both conscientious and sympathetic, and that the assistants, whose work the pupil teacher watches from day to day are thoroughly good teachers, the period of apprenticeship spent in the school may be a very valuable part of the teacher's training. But such conditions are by no means universal, and where they are absent the pupil teacher's position may be simply that of a monitor engaged in various useful but rather trivial and unimproving duties, learning, meanwhile, as best he

may, methods of school management and discipline, some of which he may have to unlearn when he goes to college.

Some gain there undoubtedly is in keeping the young people in touch with the life of the elementary school, and giving them an opportunity of finding out their tastes and capacities while it is not too late to change their profession. But on the other hand it may be feared that there is often a moral loss—a loss of the modest and humble spirit of the student—resulting from the too early assumption of the authoritative, not to say domineering, manner of the school teacher.

Both the Education Department and the School Board seem to have recognised the desirability of getting pupil teachers of a maturer age and of higher educational and social standing than are the majority of those who come direct from the elementary schools. The Board welcomes young people from secondary schools, and accepts for a shortened apprenticeship those who have passed such examinations as the Oxford and Cambridge locals. A considerable number of girls from secondary schools are to be found at the pupil teacher centres, but elementary school teaching, under present conditions, does not to any appreciable extent attract boys from the secondary schools.

But, however faulty the pupil teacher system may still be, two things have to be recognised: first, that the system may be made to yield, and does as a matter of fact yield, very good results; and, second, that it is the only practicable way by which the Board can obtain a sufficient number of trained teachers. Even as things are, there is a great scarcity of teachers, and it would have been impossible for the Board to raise the age limit of its pupil teachers without providing education for them until they reached the required age. A new regulation of the Education Department providing that after the 1st August 1904 no one is to begin to teach before the age of fifteen in the country, or sixteen in

the towns, points the way to a valuable reform, which has been made possible by the provisions of the new Acts allowing the education authority to assist or provide secondary education.

The next stage in the life of the great majority of the Board's teachers is a two years' course at a training college. The training colleges are a very weak spot in our educational system. Some of them, it is true, are very efficient, but they do not provide half enough accommodation for the teachers who ought to pass through them. Large numbers who qualify for admission by passing the King's Scholarship examination are excluded for want of room. The output from the colleges, taking the country over, is about 2400 trained teachers a year, while the number annually required to fill vacancies in the schools is about 5000. And this number is likely to be increased under the new conditions; for the new public authorities are not likely to be content with the untrained and poorly qualified teachers still to be found in large numbers in the old Voluntary Schools.

In London the deficiency of college accommodation is not so severely felt as in the country. About 90 per cent. of the London School Board's pupil teachers, owing, no doubt, to their superior training, get sufficiently high places on the scholarship list to ensure their admission to the colleges. But even in London the denominational character of the colleges is sometimes a serious hardship. The Nonconformist pupil teacher who can find no room in a Nonconformist or undenominational college may have to choose between becoming a member of the Church of England and losing altogether the opportunity of a college education on which his future prospects very largely depend. It is not surprising that some should choose rather to bow down in the house of Rimmon than to wreck their whole future career. But what can be said for a system which thus places a premium on hypocrisy, and imposes



severe penalties on some of the most conscientious teachers? The abolition of the sectarian basis of the training colleges is a condition precedent to any real reform.

Of the teacher's life at the training college it is hardly possible to speak, because one college differs widely from another. In some the training is almost wholly in method, in others the chief emphasis is upon the general culture of the teacher. No doubt the best type of college is that which is associated with the universities, where teachers can, while pursuing their special studies, enter into the common university life. The London County Council established in October 1902 a day training college at which all the students study for the B.A. or B.Sc. degree of London University, devoting about a third of their time to the more professional studies. The opportunities, therefore, for teachers to obtain a broad and liberal education in addition to a thorough technical training are gradually increasing, and the teachers under the London School Board are to a great extent availing themselves of these opportunities. Every year the number of graduates in the service of the Board increases, and the standard of culture rises.

But of the rank and file of the Board's teachers it would be an exaggeration to say that they are men and women of real culture, though their skill as teachers is unquestionable. As an able headmaster frankly expressed it to the writer: "What we know we can teach, but we don't know enough." And that is only what might be expected, when it is remembered by what means most of the Board's teachers have been obtained and what manner of life they have led. Many of them have never in their lives, except for the two short years in the training college, been out of the atmosphere of the elementary school. Taken from school at the age of thirteen or fourteen, serving the hard apprenticeship which was the lot of the pupil teacher a generation

ago, cramming just sufficient learning to enable him to pass his examinations and gain his certificate, then, perhaps, appointed to a Board School in a poor district where he has to deal continually with rough children and rougher parents, and forced by the narrowness of his income to spend his evenings, not in humanising studies and refining social intercourse, but in further spells of teaching at the evening schools, is it very wonderful that the School Board teacher should sometimes display a certain intellectual narrowness and dogmatism, a certain egotism and assertiveness of demeanour, a certain want of refinement and social charm?

It is somewhat remarkable that the women teachers of the Board—speaking quite generally—seem to be people of more natural refinement than the men. And the explanation, no doubt, is the simple one that the calling of School Board teacher is, from a pecuniary point of view, a poor one for men, though a good one for women; consequently many girls seek to enter the profession who are of a higher social class than the bulk of the boys. Headmasters are fairly well paid, receiving salaries which rise to £350 and in some cases £400 per annum. But obviously only a very few teachers can hope to become headmasters, and the salaries of the assistant masters are very inadequate. The most highly qualified assistants can only look forward to a maximum salary of £175 (a few years ago it was £155), except in the case of teachers in Higher Grade and pupil teachers' schools, who receive a small additional allowance. The maximum for women assistants is £140, and for headmistresses from £150 to £300 according to the size of the school.

Now it may be truly said that assistant masters are poorly paid all the world over. But that is not a consideration which will attract bright lads to the service of the Board, and a substantial increase in the rates of payment for assistant masters would seem to

be an essential condition of any considerable improvement in the character of the teaching staff. The relative attractiveness of the School Board service for women and for men is strikingly shown by the number of applicants for pupil teacherships. Owing to the facts that the infants' as well as the girls' departments are entirely staffed by women, and that young women are not seldom enticed from the teaching ranks by the superior attractions of another calling, there are from four to five times as many women as men annually wanted for the schools. But under present conditions it is found very difficult to maintain even this proportion. At the Offord Road centre, for instance, when I visited it in the autumn of 1903, the numbers on the roll were 291 girls and 18 boys.

Of course a general increase of salaries would involve a heavy expenditure, which would appreciably affect the school rate; and no doubt this is the chief consideration which has prevented the Board from dealing more liberally with its teachers. But the comparative unpopularity of the Board's service during recent years is not wholly a matter of salaries. The Board is particularly exigent in its demands on teachers, requiring them after appointment to spend much of their spare time in working for certain certificates, and withholding the annual increment of salary till these are obtained. It is not surprising, therefore, that some of the provincial and suburban educational authorities which pay quite as good salaries as the London Board, and do not make these special demands on their teachers, should attract to their service a good many of the pupil teachers who are trained under the London Board.

There is another matter which, though largely personal and—one may hope—temporary, is not without effect on the relations between the teachers and the Board. Of late years the School Board—or perhaps it would be more correct to say certain powerful members

of the Board—have maintained a peculiarly unsympathetic and suspicious attitude towards the teachers, which has resulted in much irritation. And thus it happens that while on public grounds teachers generally are deploring the destruction of the London School Board, many of them are rejoicing privately in the hope that the change may give them a more sympathetic and tactful body of employers.

These matters, though seemingly trivial, are of great importance. For among the changes and reforms of the future none will be more important than those which have for their object the securing for the people's schools of the finest possible type of teacher. Upon the personality of the teachers depend not merely the success of the school in the narrow scholastic sense, but also its success as a social and civilising force. In many ways the Board School teacher's influence is greater than that of the secondary school teacher. The moral and intellectual leadership of hundreds of future citizens is his, if he choose to accept it. How important is it, then, that all teachers in our elementary schools should be men and women who will use their great opportunities wisely and well! Nowhere are true ladies and gentlemen more needed than in the poorest schools. There is no greater fallacy than that rough manners are best suited for Bethnal Green and Stepney. To the man or woman who is gentle though strong, kind and sympathetic, broad-minded and large-hearted, there are few more influential spheres of public service than a teachership, especially a head teachership, in a Board School. And there is no reason in the nature of the case why the great headmasters of the future—men who like Arnold of Rugby and Thring of Uppingham will leave their mark on educational history—should not be found in some of our elementary schools.

## CHAPTER XII

### INDUSTRIAL SCHOOLS : TRUANT SCHOOLS

UP to this point we have been dealing with the ordinary work of the London School Board—that which is concerned with the interests of normal children, who form, of course, the great majority of the child population. We have now to consider the special and exceptional arrangements which have been devised to meet the needs of special classes of children.

The School Board is, of course, a purely educational body. Its first and last concern is to see that every child in London receives a good elementary education. But in removing the obstacles which hinder the performance of this duty it is led into many by-paths of social effort; and some of the work which cannot in the narrower sense be called educational is quite as necessary and quite as beneficial to the community as any that can be tested by an educational examination. The child life of London is so varied in character that no possible scheme of education can be applicable to the whole. The ordinary schoolhouse and the ordinary teaching would fail altogether to touch the lives of many thousands of children whose need of education is, if possible, even greater than that of the normal children for whom the curriculum of the ordinary Board School is designed.

A system of teaching which assumes that children can see and hear obviously fails if the pupils are blind or deaf; and how the Board meets the needs of these

physically afflicted children we shall see in future chapters. But it is equally true that the ordinary day school system, which necessarily assumes some degree of decency in the home surroundings and some degree of co-operation between parents and teachers, breaks down where home life is practically non-existent and where parents are indifferent or even hostile to the work of the teachers. If the home life of the child is so ill-ordered and undisciplined that he cannot be induced or compelled to attend the day school, he must be provided temporarily with a better ordered home, or he will get no education at all. And if the parents are so utterly vicious and degraded that the good influence of the day school is morally certain to be nullified by the evil influence of the home, the child must be taken right away from the control of his unworthy parents. This is the work of the Industrial Schools.

Although the road to the Industrial Schools lies through the police courts, it would be the greatest mistake to suppose that these schools are in any sense penal establishments or that the children committed to them are criminals. Industrial Schools are for the prevention, not for the punishment, of crime. The children sent to them are those found begging, wandering without a settled place of abode or visible means of subsistence, frequenting the company of reputed thieves, living in houses of ill fame, or being beyond the control of parents. Obviously these are "crimes" which call not for punishment but for a change of environment. These children have begun, through their misfortune rather than their fault, to tread the path that surely leads to a life of vice and crime; from that path humanity and true economy alike demand that they shall be removed with all possible speed and led into another of which the natural goal is a life of sobriety and honest industry.

A few children in the Industrial Schools, a small minority of the whole, may have been actually guilty of

stealing or of some other offence that is punishable by imprisonment and would have been so punished a few years ago. For these children, too, the great need is a better and happier environment, and magistrates have gladly availed themselves of the Industrial School as a method at once milder and more hopeful than the prison or the reformatory for dealing with juvenile offenders who have, as it were, slipped into, rather than deliberately entered, the paths of crime. Then there is another offence—and this the commonest of all—for which children are committed to Industrial Schools—the offence of non-attendance at day school, in other words, truancy. The London School Board has two schools for cases of truancy alone.

Industrial Schools as an institution are not, of course, of very recent date. They existed before the days of School Boards, and the Act of 1870 gave to the Boards the power of contributing towards the cost of the existing Industrial Schools or of establishing such schools of their own. The London Board decided in the first instance to exercise its power of aiding existing schools and sending its own Industrial School cases to such schools. It was not long, however, before the accommodation available in existing schools for the London cases proved quite inadequate, and the Board therefore decided to establish an Industrial School of its own. Accordingly a school, afterwards known as the Davenport Hill Boys' Home, was opened at Brentwood in Essex. The late Miss Davenport Hill, after whom the home was named, was for many years a most able and devoted member of the School Board, who took a special interest in the Industrial School work. Shortly afterwards a second Industrial School, the training ship *Shaftesbury*, was started; this was followed by two Truant Schools for boys, an Industrial School for girls, and three Day Industrial Schools. The Davenport Hill School was closed in May 1902, the building having been declared unsuitable

from a sanitary point of view. But the other schools are still in active operation, and the Board has in addition half the accommodation of an Industrial School at Portslade, which is under the joint management of the London and Brighton School Boards. A home for little boys, whom it is thought undesirable to send to the ordinary Industrial Schools, has just been opened at Clapham Park, under the care of a matron and female staff; the children here attend day schools in the neighbourhood. Besides these institutions the London Board is entitled to send children to more than sixty Industrial Schools under other management in various parts of the country. Under this dual system about 3000 London children are to be found at any given time in industrial schools managed wholly or partly by other authorities, and not many more than 1000 in schools which are strictly London Board Schools. But as it is these latter schools which may be presumed best to represent the ideas of the Board on the management of Industrial Schools, it is to them we must direct special attention.

Something has already been said, in the chapter on School Attendance, of the preliminary proceedings by which a child becomes an inmate of a Truant or an ordinary Industrial School. The case, we will suppose, is that of a boy who persistently plays truant. The parents have been fined once or twice, but their foolish weakness in the past has been such that now they really have no control over the boy; and the Superintendent of Visitors and the Industrial Schools Sub-Committee being satisfied that the parents have done their best to get the boy to school, recommend his committal to a Truant School. The magistrate makes an order for the boy's detention at the Highbury Truant School till he reaches the age of fourteen, certifies that his religious persuasion appears to be that of the Church of England, and orders his parents to pay 2s. a week towards his support during the period of



his detention. Had the boy been a Roman Catholic or a Jew he would have been sent to the Homerton School, and had he been a Protestant Nonconformist to one of the Nonconformist Schools with which the Board has an agreement; if his parents were extremely poor the amount of their contribution would be even less than 2s. a week, if they were fairly well off it would be more.

Although committed till he reaches the age of fourteen, or for three years—whichever is the shorter period—the boy will not be detained so long as that. In about three months' time he will be out again "on license." The condition of his license is that he attends day school regularly. Should he not do so, his license will be revoked and he will be back again for a further period of captivity, this time of slightly longer duration.

It is generally a tearful and spiritless truant who is ushered by a policeman into the presence of the Governor at the Highbury or Homerton school; for the Truant School is the Tartarus of the truant's imagination. If it is his first visit, he is full of grim forebodings of he knows not what horrors; if his second or third, he reflects, without terror indeed but with infinite sadness, that he is in for a further spell of obedience, order, work—three things your genuine truant cannot away with.

After the boy has undergone a careful medical examination and been certified free from disease and fit for the ordinary work of the school, he dons the neat blue uniform of the Truant School, his own clothes, after a precautionary baking in a disinfecting chamber, being carefully packed away until his release. The change of garments symbolises a deeper change. From the moment when he dons the livery of the Truant School, the boy's life becomes a complete antithesis of what it has hitherto been. The boy who has been accustomed to order his life according to his own sweet will does

everything now by rule; he who knew no restraint knows now no liberty; the wild boy of the streets, who was the despair of parents and teachers, has become a paragon of docility. The explanation of the rapid and striking change no doubt is that the truant, however much orderly and disciplined ways may be opposed to his predilections, has sufficient sense to refrain from fighting against the inevitable. He conforms to his environment. He sees that his companions in the school have surrendered to lawful authority, and he surrenders too. In the work of acclimatising the newcomer to the new conditions, the other boys take probably a larger share than the officers. The principle on which elephants are tamed applies pretty much to Truant Schools. The "rogue" placed between two tame elephants soon becomes as docile as they.

The older boys, if their conduct has been good, are made monitors, and prove very useful in maintaining order. There is no disciplinarian like your ex-rebel; he knows the wiles of his kind and how best to counteract them. I have seen at the Highbury Truant School a class of comparatively new boys drilling in the most perfect order under the direction of a boy monitor, without any supervision from a teacher. The only possible criticism anyone could make regarding the discipline of a Truant School is that it is a little too good. There is something almost uncanny in the grim stolidity of the boys, the stiffness and precision of their every movement. They have intervals for play—it is true—but for the greater part of the day they are under orders, performing every duty by word of command. Watch them, for example, coming to take their places in the dining-room for the afternoon meal. They march in in single file and sidle along to their places at the long tables with the short, rhythmic steps of soldiers "closing up" on parade; carefully they "cover," and then stand in long parallel lines, erect, silent, motionless. An officer plays a few chords on the harmonium, then

laps sharply with a stick or mallet. Instantly all the eyes are closed and the hands placed in an attitude of prayer; then grace is sung, not unpleasingly, though many of the voices are of coarse texture. When the verse is ended, there is not a movement till the rap is heard again; then the hands are brought down sharply and simultaneously to the sides and all stand at "attention." Another signal, and they sit down to the dripping rolls and mugs of cocoa, which are consumed with plenty of appetite, but without the seasoning of genial conversation. It is all a triumph of organisation and discipline, yet not wholly pleasant to contemplate. The sense of restraint and almost complete absence of liberty is a little oppressive to the visitor, as it must be to the scholars.

Yet it would be wrong to suppose that there is any excessive harshness in the administration of a Truant School. Punishments are few, and flogging is rarely resorted to. The absence of liberty and the military stiffness are part of a deliberately adopted system aiming at a definite end. The weakness of these boys has been their indolent, irregular ways and unwillingness to submit to authority; therefore every possible means must be taken to inculcate habits of industry, regularity and obedience. And it must always be remembered that the inmates of the Truant Schools are temporary sojourners only. If they were making their homes there, we would look for some things that are more suggestive of home life. The Truant School is not a home, but a sanatorium for the morally infirm, and the whole regimen is devised to effect a cure.

And how does the truant himself like his new life? If you ask him the question, he will tell you frankly enough that he doesn't like it at all. And that, no doubt, is just as well, or he might be only too willing to come back again. The deprivation of liberty is a hard trial to one whose inordinate love of liberty has been his undoing. But with that single exception the truant

has little to complain of. A great deal of care and thought are devoted to secure his physical, mental and moral welfare, and even his personal comfort. There must always be a considerable proportion of boys in the London Truant Schools who have never in their lives before been so comfortably fed and clothed and housed. Every possible care is taken of the health of the boys. The sanitary arrangements are excellent; no basins are used in the lavatories; the boys wash under a spray of water, so that it is impossible for two boys to use the same water; each boy also has his own towel. At Homerton they have the additional luxury of a swimming bath; this is the one thing still needed to complete the otherwise admirable equipment of the Highbury School. The dormitories at both places are lofty and well ventilated, but one is reminded by the construction of the windows that the young sleepers are prisoners; the windows are locked, so that they can only be opened a few inches. It should be mentioned however, that danger from fire is amply guarded against; the officer who sleeps in the room overlooking each dormitory has a key with which he can open the windows, and canvas shoots are provided and the boys drilled in their use.

If you ask a boy at one of these schools why he played truant, you may elicit—after patient cross-examination—some interesting information. It may be that he is a big fellow and a dunce, and is sensitive about sitting in the same class with little boys. It may be that he has become a truant almost against his will in deference to the public opinion of his street or court, where defiance of the School Board is a recognised form of heroism and attendance at school is regarded as a pusillanimous surrender to the forces of law and order. But the commonest reason of all is simply that the boy “doesn’t like school”; the most interesting lessons fail to arouse any enthusiasm in him, and sitting still is to him the most irksome thing in the world.

In the arrangement of the curriculum of the Board's Industrial Schools these idiosyncrasies have not been left out of sight. All the lessons are specially short, and the time given to them is not more than three hours daily. It is almost needless to say that the truant as a rule does not shine in the schoolroom. He has been wont to take his schooling in homeopathic doses, and has a strong aversion from all kinds of brain work. You may see in the Truant Schools big lads of twelve or thirteen who are still in Standards I. and II., some who are even below Standard I.—that is to say, who cannot read words of more than one syllable and cannot write their own names. But these dunces make more progress in the Truant School than they ever did outside. A truant's exercise book is sometimes a rather curious psychological study. The first pages, written immediately after his arrival at the school, are slovenly and erratic like himself; but gradually the writing acquires form, the blots become fewer, the sums more often correct, and the last pages before the boy leaves the school after his three months' detention are as neat and presentable as anything one could wish to see. Three or four months later, perhaps, the same boy is back again, his license cancelled owing to his continued truancy. The exercise book shows clearly the effects of this wild interlude; the boy has fallen far below the standard of a few months before.

The practice both at Homerton and at Highbury is for the boys to spend half of each day at school and half at the various trade classes; those who were at work in the morning are at school in the afternoon, and *vice versa*. Tailoring and shoemaking are taught at both schools, and at Highbury mat-making also is taught. It might be thought that, owing to the constant change of pupils, it would be impossible to carry out the teaching of skilled handicrafts with any degree of efficiency. Such, however, is not the case. Many of the boys who are quite dull at lessons show great aptitude

as workmen, and the efficiency of their work may be judged from the fact that the school workshops supply all the clothes and boots used in the schools, and of course mend them as required, while the Highbury mat-making shop produces a considerable proportion of the door mats used by the London School Board throughout London.



**MAT-MAKING AT HIGBURY TRUANT SCHOOL.**

In all the trade classes a double object is kept in view. The boys are not only provided during their time at school with an occupation which keeps them out of mischief and saves the ratepayers hundreds of pounds yearly, but they are also given a thorough technical training which may be invaluable to them in after life. The tailoring pupils learn to draught garments of all kinds, not only those used in their own schools ; and the shoemakers, as far as possible, learn all

branches of the trade. The teaching of trades is, of course, contrary to the general practice of the School Board, but the Board and the Home Office—the Department which controls Industrial School work—have been sensible enough not to allow an educational theory, however excellent in ordinary cases, to stand in the way of the practical requirements of these lads. The knowledge of a trade is often one of the most potent agencies in the moral and social salvation of boys of the class found in Truant and Industrial Schools. Left to themselves, these boys, with their unsteady and roving habits, would almost certainly join the ranks of the casually employed, and the knowledge that they have a good trade at their fingers' ends may well prove the determining factor which induces them to accept their teachers' advice and start life along a safer and more hopeful road than their own inclinations might lead them to take.

The boys also do the greater part of the household work. During the hour between rising in the morning and breakfast nearly all are busy sweeping, scrubbing, window cleaning, bed making, and so on; and later in the day small contingents will be engaged in laundry work, preparing the dinner, making bread or darning socks. Some of the boys after a little practice make capital darners, and the skill of the young bakers was well shown at the Highbury School recently when, during a fortnight's absence of the master baker, two or three of the boys turned out the school bread each day as satisfactorily as at any other time.

Physical training is one of the matters in which the Truant Schools excel. Every effort is made to make the boys strong and healthy. Every boy has every day a good spell of physical drill with or without dumb-bells, and the elder boys take gymnastics also. The physical benefit of this work is apparent in the sturdy figures of the boys who have been for some time at the school. It is also an important element in the moral training, tending to induce habits of order and prompt obedience.

The truants never leave the school till their term of detention has expired, except on Sundays, when they march to church accompanied by their teachers. The tacit understanding that children whose parents are of no particular creed may be described as "Church of England" simplifies a good deal the arrangements for religious teaching. At Highbury all the boys are



A TAILORING CLASS AT HIGHBURY TRUANT SCHOOL.

certified as belonging to the Church of England, and everyone seems satisfied with the arrangement under which they take their places on Sunday morning with the rather fashionable congregation at St. Augustine's, Highbury New Park, and receive during the week the usual undenominational Bible instruction according to the School Board syllabus. At Homerton the Roman Catholic boys receive religious instruction from a priest of their own faith who visits the school,



and in his absence by a Roman Catholic member of the staff.

The Highbury School especially has the advantage of the constant active interest and frequent presence of Mr J. W. Sharp, the Chairman of the Industrial Schools Committee of the Board. Every Friday evening Mr Sharp attends at the school and conducts a simple religious service for the boys. He takes the keenest interest in their welfare, and sees each boy before he leaves the school and presents him with a New Testament and a card of prayers.

There is no doubt of the sincere desire of all connected with these schools to do their best for the very difficult class of boys with whom they have to deal. The question arises: "To what extent are the schools successful?" One cannot answer such a question in a word and say that they are superlatively successful. Still less can one with any degree of fairness charge them with failure. In rather more than half the cases the Truant Schools do succeed in their primary aim of curing truancy, the boys returning to the day school and attending with exemplary regularity after a single term of detention. But in a large minority of cases the truant comes back again, his license cancelled, while in not a few there follow a third, a fourth, and even a fifth period of detention. But even in these cases it would hardly be fair to say that the schools have completely failed. They have not indeed cured truancy, but they have imparted some degree of education to the most unpromising of scholars, in some cases bringing up to the Fifth or Sixth Standard boys who, but for the Truant Schools, would never have learned to read and write. Nor does it always follow that the bad scholar will be a bad workman. The training of the Truant School, which failed to reconcile him to the ordinary schooling, may have gone far to fit him for the rougher schooling of the world, to give him right principles, a strong, healthy body and some skill in handicraft. The

Governors of both schools frequently receive letters and visits from old boys which show that even some whom a narrow view might have regarded as failures are filling not unworthily a place among the world's honest workers, and are therefore in any true estimate anything but failures.

## CHAPTER XIII

### INDUSTRIAL SCHOOLS: THE "SHAFTESBURY" TRAINING SHIP

IN 1877 the need for additional Industrial School accommodation led the Industrial Schools Committee of the Board to recommend the establishment of a training ship in the Thames. The Board accepted the proposal, and, after vainly endeavouring to obtain a suitable ship from the Admiralty, agreed to the purchase from the P. and O. Company of the steamer *Nubia* which, after being fitted up as a training ship, was re-christened the *Shaftesbury* and stationed off Grays' for the accommodation of 350 boys, a number afterwards increased to 400.

The voyage of the good ship *Shaftesbury* has not been all smooth sailing. Her early history was marred by administrative mistakes, some of a serious character. The part played by the School Board, which was already ready to charge the Board with excessive expenditure, was only too good a reason for their strictures on the *Shaftesbury*. In many directions the ship was less than ideal. The cost of the ship, which was scarcely less than that of a new ship specially built for the purpose, and which was purchased to replace the *Nubia*, proved quite unnecessary. The ship had to be sold at a ruinous price, and the extravagance of the first purchase was somewhat from a too

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niggardly policy. At a later period the defalcations of a clerk, and consequent legal proceedings, brought the *Shaftesbury* under public notice in a very unpleasant way. Investigations showed some laxity of administration and led to changes in the business department.

In more recent years the ship has sailed into smooth waters. The administration has become both economical and efficient, and the ship is recognised as one of the most effective pieces of machinery the Board has yet devised for checking a waste far more serious than the waste of money—the waste of young lives forced into vicious and criminal ways by the pressure of adverse circumstances.

There is a radical difference between the Truant Schools and the *Shaftesbury*, which shows itself in the demeanour of the boys and the whole life of the ship. To the Truant School a boy is sent for a short period to be cured of truancy, and the hope is that when he leaves he will resume the ordinary day school life without any wish to see the inside of a Truant School again. The Truant School would fail of its purpose if it proved so attractive that the boys wished to return. To the *Shaftesbury*, on the other hand, the boy goes for the remainder of his school life, and even after he leaves the ship it is still in a sense his home. The boy sent to the *Shaftesbury* is taken right away from his parents, and the Board, acting through the Captain-Superintendent, assumes towards him parental as well as educational responsibilities. In all except Education Act cases, that is to say in the great majority of the cases sent to the *Shaftesbury*, the Board's legal control extends till the age of eighteen is reached. The boy at Homerton or Highbury, however kindly treated, feels that he is a prisoner, and the Governor, good friend though he often proves to be, is regarded more or less as a gaoler. The boy on the *Shaftesbury* is at home, and Captain Scriven is his foster father.

On the occasion of my last visit to the ship I had a good example of the spirit that animates the *Shaftesbury* boys. The whole ship's company was camping out for a few weeks, and I had to ask the way to the camp. Fortunately I fell in with a *Shaftesbury* boy who was returning to the camp from an errand to the ship, and he acted as my guide. He was a fair-haired, blue-eyed boy with a happy, smiling face. He spoke with a pronounced Cockney twang, but was as bright and well-mannered a lad as one could wish to meet. He was bubbling over with pride in his ship, and was only too pleased to discourse about life on board and in camp. He knew the ordinary Board School—had attended one for years, when he was not playing truant—and might therefore be regarded as a credible witness when he deposed that the *Shaftesbury* was a jolly sight better. "And no one could have a better captain than we have, sir," was his entirely spontaneous tribute to Captain Scriven, whom he had good reason to know, being, as he explained, one of the "captain's steerage boys," whose special duty it is to wait on the captain.

The impression left on the visitor by the appearance of the boys at work and at play is that such a happy and contented spirit is typical rather than exceptional on the *Shaftesbury*. The boys have a large measure of freedom, and when a few days' leave of absence is allowed to visit friends, they always return punctually to the ship. Although all the boys of the *Shaftesbury* have been sent thither by magistrates' order, the word "detention" seems singularly inappropriate to their free, happy life. An institution less suggestive of a penitentiary it would be difficult to find.

The offences for which boys are sent to the *Shaftesbury* are mostly begging, wandering without visible means of subsistence, associating with reputed thieves, and being beyond the control of parents. A few

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truants, whose homes are such that it is thought desirable to remove the boys from them altogether, may also be sent to the *Shaftesbury*. It will thus be seen that in nearly all cases the boys on the *Shaftesbury* are "offenders" only in a technical sense. It is the failure of parents to do their duty by their children



A SAIL-MAKING CLASS IN THE "SHAFTESBURY" TRAINING SHIP.

that creates the need for this and the other Industrial Schools.

Life on board the *Shaftesbury* is a round of cheerful activity from morning till night. The half time system of work and schooling obtains here, as in other Industrial Schools, with the difference that on the *Shaftesbury* each boy has a full day's schooling and a full day's work alternately, both, however, being well seasoned with play.

The work is specially designed to fit the boys for a

seafaring life, which naturally many of them choose when the time for leaving comes. A full course of instruction in seamanship is given, and the lessons on the *Shaftesbury* are supplemented by practical work on the tender *Themis*, a topsail schooner of 145 tons, which, during the summer months, with a crew of three officers and thirty boys, cruises about the mouth of the Thames, occasionally prolonging the voyage down the English Channel as far as Plymouth. Of late years the more scientific work of navigation has been taught to boys in the upper standards, and with the grounding thus given an industrious and intelligent boy, who goes to sea before the mast, may reasonably hope to pass his mate's examination and in time command a ship of his own. The captain offers a sextant to any old boy who obtains his first mate's certificate, as two at least have already done.

Shoemaking, tailoring, sail-making and cooking are the trades taught on board. The boys also do a little boat-building in the carpenter's shop on shore, and help the ship's carpenter in carrying out the painting and small repairs of the ship and tender. Thus, whether the *Shaftesbury* boy goes to sea or not, he can hardly help becoming a "handy man."

Here is a vivacious description by a *Shaftesbury* boy of the ordinary life on board:—"Work and play on board the *Shaftesbury* are intermingled with each other, so that each boy gets a fair amount of one and plenty of the other. The work consists principally in scrubbing decks, cleaning bright work, painting ship and boats, and many different occupations—viz., shoemaking, sail-making, tailoring, sailing, gunnery, rowing, and last, but not least, the band. At play we have called all shoregoing games into requisition, besides many of our own. On the upper deck football and cricket may be seen in full swing, whilst ping-pong (under difficulties), chess, draughts and dominoes are played between decks. When summer comes on, bath-

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ing and long excursions in boats are the order of the day, while 'sling the monkey' is played in the evening."

Drill and physical exercises play an important part in the training of the boys. Some of the drill is of a particularly picturesque character; the boys are taught to handle rifle and cutlass with vigour and smartness. But perhaps the most exciting piece of work they do in



GYMNASTICS ON THE "SHAFTESBURY" TRAINING SHIP.

this direction is the drill with the field gun, which they manipulate with lightning rapidity. They have taken the gun by train, dragged it through London streets, and been highly complimented on their smartness by military and naval officers. Besides these special exercises there are the more ordinary methods of physical training—gymnastics and exercises with dumb-bells, wands and Indian clubs; and the result of this work, coupled with the good food and generally



healthy life, is seen in the vigorous, sturdy figures of the great majority of the boys.

The *Shaftesbury* has the great advantage of a fine playing field on shore in which cricket and football can be indulged in. Here also is a large covered swimming bath which, on a hot summer afternoon, is a source of much healthful pleasure to the boys. Most of them can swim, many very well, and the simple expedient of throwing pennies into the water reveals the fact that many of them are very expert divers.

In another part of the field is the hospital, a very pleasant and convenient building, which, happily, is not often largely tenanted.

Sometimes for five or six weeks in the summer the whole ship's company encamps in the playing field, and the boys enjoy a pleasant and healthful change from the ordinary routine of their lives. The camp is organised on military lines, with youthful sentries guarding it by day and night. It is chiefly a time of holiday, ordinary lessons being dispensed with. A good deal of drill is done in the mornings, the band practises, and there are, of course, tent and mess-room duties to be attended to, but the afternoons and evenings are free for cricket, swimming and other diversions.

There is no difficulty about the religious question on board the *Shaftesbury*. The ordinary undenominational Bible teaching common to all London Board Schools is given daily, and on Sunday services are conducted by Captain Scriven or Mr W. T. Litton, the head schoolmaster. A shortened form of the Church of England service is used, the bulk of the boys being certified as belonging to the Church of England; but no objection is ever raised, or could reasonably be raised, to the presence of the few Nonconformist boys at this simple service. The fact that the captain himself is the parson is the best guarantee against the teaching of anything approaching controversial theology. The Roman Catholic boys attend their own

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church on shore, and receive visits on board from the Roman Catholic priest. The hearty singing of the boys is an inspiring feature of the Sunday services on board. Those boys who show special musical talent have a chance of developing it in the school band, and often of turning it to practical account in after life, as the



CUTLASS DRILL ON THE "SHAFTESBURY" TRAINING SHIP.

majority of the young bandsmen eventually join army or navy bands.

*Shaftesbury* boys are great as entertainers. They have figured more than once in the Lord Mayor's Show, and have taken part in many entertainments for charitable objects. Their bright ways and smart appearance, helped by a picturesque costume, make them great popular favourites wherever they go.

No boy has a chance to be dull or lazy on board the *Shaftesbury*. He is not overburdened with work, but

he is kept constantly occupied; he is not allowed to loaf. Even in winter time and wet weather, when outdoor sports are impossible, he is not without resources. A good library and a fair assortment of suitable periodicals are available for his use. A certain amount of evening school work is done, but the lessons chosen are of the more recreative kind. Entertainments are given once a week, and the captain knows how to keep the attention of the boys with a "yarn" which will not be without helpful suggestions. The orthodox indoor games—dominoes, ping-pong, and so on—are indulged in; and with these varied occupations, and certain indescribable diversions of their own invention, which can only be summarised under the generic name "skylarking," the boys find it no difficult matter to drive dull care away during the long winter evenings.

- When a boy turns the age of fifteen, the important question of his career in life has to be faced and decided. Although the Board's legal control extends till he reaches the age of eighteen, it is recognised that unless a boy's own choice determines his occupation, he is not likely to be successful in it, nor to remain in it long. The captain's duty, therefore, at this juncture is limited to advising, but fortunately there are not many *Shaftesbury* boys who, by the time they leave the ship, have not learned to look upon Captain Scriven as their best friend, and his advice is seldom disregarded. The Board's legal position at this time in the boy's career is chiefly valuable, if he himself wishes to avail himself of it. It may supply him with a means of escape from bad parents, who, after neglecting or even ill-treating him during his childhood, may be anxious now to avail themselves of his earning capacity; or it may be valuable as giving him the right to return to the ship while seeking a new situation, should the first turn out unsatisfactorily.

The captain's object is to get as many boys as possible into the army, navy or merchant service, be-

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cause, lacking, as nearly all of them do, the restraining influence of a good home, they are far more likely, it is thought, to turn out well if subjected to a continuance, more or less, of the disciplined life to which they have been accustomed, than if left to their own devices and to the influence of doubtful friends. Of 166 boys who left the ship during the year ended July 1903, 10 joined the Royal Navy, 33 entered army or navy bands, 67 went to sea in merchant ships, 7 obtained situations on shore, 11 emigrated to Canada, 38 were allowed to return to live with their friends, 2 were transferred to other institutions, and 1 died.

And what is the record of the boys in after life? For that, after all, is the great test of the success of the work done on the ship. The inquiry is not difficult to answer in the case of the *Shaftesbury*, for the after careers of the boys, at any rate for the first few years after they leave the ship, are generally well known. Their homes are regularly visited, and reports are received from their employers. From the information thus obtained, an annual return is compiled and sent to the Home Office respecting the boys who left during the preceding three years. The return for 1903 showed that of the 429 boys who had left during the preceding three years, there were in regular employment 354, in casual employment 30, reported as convicted of crime 22, unknown 17, deceased 6. Thus if we exclude the unknown and the deceased, we find that the casually employed and the convicted amount together to about 12 per cent of the whole. Ten of those convicted were said to be improving in character, and it is, of course, possible that some of the unemployed or casually employed were only temporarily and for good reason in such a position; but setting against this some possible unsatisfactory cases amongst the "unknown," it is probably not unfair to say that in 13 or 14 per cent. of the cases received on board the training of the *Shaftesbury* proves more or less a failure.

Is such a proportion unduly high? Obviously a school which has had 22 old boys in three years convicted of crime has still much to do in the way of extending and strengthening its moral influence. Yet when we remember the evil bias in the life of nearly every boy who joins the *Shaftesbury*, the fact that about 86 per cent. do well in after life—some of them exceedingly well—cannot, I think, be regarded as otherwise than encouraging. Nearly every one of the 86 per cent. who choose industrious and respectable ways is a brand plucked from the burning—a life saved from brutality, thriftlessness and squalor, if not from actual crime.

The figures which relate to the after life of the boys are too significant to be entirely overlooked. But we are not left in this matter to the evidence of figures alone. Captain Scriven maintains with many of the old boys an intimate, human relationship, of which official reports can give little indication. He frequently receives visits on the ship from old boys, and hundreds of letters reach him every year from *Shaftesbury* boys in all parts of the world—letters which he never fails to answer. Sitting by the captain at his desk, as he turns over a bundle of letters and photographs, one gets a kaleidoscopic glimpse of the lives of typical old *Shaftesbury* boys, and learns something of the affection with which the old ship and the old teachers and companions are remembered.

Here is a letter from a blue-jacket in the Channel Squadron, who asks that a certificate may be sent on to him, as he would like to have it to remind him of the old ship. He is coming to visit the ship when he gets home, and asks permission to bring a friend, so that he may show *her* (significant pronoun) the ship on which he was trained. Here is a letter from a quartermaster-sergeant in a crack regiment, who has been through the whole of the South African campaign. It is accompanied by a number of photographs illustrating life

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in South Africa, and by some verses—by no means devoid of merit—in which the worthy sergeant records some incidents in a scout's life under "Fighting Mac." The next letter deals with the less romantic life of a salesman in a provision shop in the New Kent Road; the writer is getting on well, and has pleasant recollections of jolly times spent on board, and of kindness shown to him when he left the ship. From a soldier in India come friendly greetings and news about other *Shaftesbury* boys. From a settler in Canada comes a photograph of the log house in which he lives, and which his own hands have built. A letter from a young bandsman in a Worcestershire regiment is full of expressions of affectionate gratitude. Enclosed is a photograph of the writer in his regimentals, and on the back of this the captain has written "One of the best boys ever received on board the *Shaftesbury*." It seems that this young fellow, in his last year on the ship, took the highest prize for school work, and also the prize awarded by the votes of his schoolfellows to "the most popular boy."

A photograph one is a little surprised to see in this collection is one of a handsome, refined-looking man in evening dress. This is an old boy who has developed in a somewhat unusual direction; he is engaged in business in a provincial city, and devotes his evenings to teaching elocution, of which he is a past master. The programmes of his recitals point to his being a man of refinement and literary taste, and the long and interesting letter accompanying the photograph fully confirms this idea. The letter is of so self-revealing a character, and moreover gives so vivid a glimpse of life on the *Shaftesbury* and the influence of that life on a receptive mind, that I must quote part of it.

"The impression you made on me," says the writer, "while I was on board is very real and true to me at this moment. I fancy as I write I hear you reading the morning

prayers, standing at the reading-desk on the school deck. Now the prayers are over and you are looking very sadly at us all, and telling us how grieved you are that there are so many boys reported for bad conduct. Better than that I can see another morning. It is New Year's morning. You have spoken earnestly and tenderly to us, and urged us to keep a better record for the year just begun. Then you raise your cap and turn to the officers grouped round you and say, 'I wish you all, officers and boys, a most happy and prosperous New Year.' I see every officer bare his head, and I hear that clear, hearty shout from 300 odd young throats, 'Same to you, sir.' Now the scene changes; it is night, the hammocks are slung, and you are going the rounds. I hear you and Mr M—— come up the ladder to the school deck where I lie listening. You pass by my hammock. Once you slightly catch your shoulder against my hammock as you pass. Then all is still for a moment, and 'Good-night, boys,' rings through the ship, and 'Good-night, sir,' sounds out clearly in reply. How I should enjoy to spend a whole day on board and take my part again. I always disliked washing mornings; my soap never would last out. But I'd wake up happily and spring out eagerly if it were washing day on board to-morrow and I were there."

Such letters as these, whether couched in the graceful and happy language of the one quoted or in the rougher phraseology of warm-hearted lads whose strong point was never book-learning, are more eloquent evidence than any statistics could be of the real influence for good which the *Shaftesbury* has exerted on those who have been on board. For many a ragged and neglected little urchin the day when he stood trembling before a London magistrate charged perhaps with the heinous offence of being "without visible means of subsistence," or with being beyond the control of parents who had never exercised the elementary duties of parenthood, has proved a red-letter day indeed, the beginning of a new life of order and care and discipline, leading to a happy, self-respecting and useful manhood.

## CHAPTER XIV

### INDUSTRIAL SCHOOLS : GORDON HOUSE GIRLS' HOME

"At last you have a home" is said to have been the remark with which King William IV. presented to Lady Kennedy Erskine (afterwards Lady Augusta Gordon), his daughter by the actress, Mrs Jordan, a beautiful mansion on the banks of the Thames at Isleworth. The home of the King's daughter is now the home of about seventy little girls, the waifs and strays of the London streets, who have become the wards of the London School Board; and to them the words of King William might, with more literal truth, be addressed, for few of them have known anything worthy to be called a home before they came to live in this beautiful house by the river.

The children at Gordon House have little enough in common with the grand lady who gave her name to the house, except the fact that like her they have little reason to be proud of their parents. They belong to the same class as the boys on the *Shaftesbury*—children of drunken and dissolute parents, wanderers and beggars, and associates of thieves and immoral women; children so grossly neglected that their state of destitution has become an offence in the eyes of the law.

It is somewhat noteworthy that by far the greater number of the children of this unfortunate class are boys. The chief reason probably is that girls are less adventurous than boys; they very rarely play truant, and they do not take so readily to the life of the streets.



Perhaps, too, girls are less frequently neglected than boys; where homes are thoroughly bad a friendly relative or neighbour more often comes to the rescue



LITTLE HOUSEMAIDS AT WORK IN THE HALL  
(GORDON HOUSE GIRLS' HOME).

of the girls. However this may be, the number of girls requiring Industrial School accommodation has always been much smaller than the number of boys. It was not until the year 1897 that the Board opened its first Industrial School for girls. Previous to that time the girls' cases which came before the Industrial

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Schools Committee were dealt with by being sent to various Industrial Schools for girls with which the Board have agreements. That plan is still adopted in many cases, but very young children are now generally sent to Gordon House.

There is little enough in the outward appearance of Gordon House to suggest a school or institution. Standing in the midst of the spacious and beautiful grounds, the long two-storeyed building, creeper-covered in parts, wears still the appearance of an old English family mansion. Inside the house the changes are naturally more apparent. The entrance hall, into which we are admitted by a bright little girl in a neat green serge frock, is no doubt much the same as it was when the doorkeeper was a powdered flunky. The marble floor and marble columns and the fine oak staircase are unchanged, but a School Board "museum" standing in one corner has a slightly incongruous appearance. To the left of the hall is the drawing-room, which has a fine marble mantelpiece and a richly-moulded and gilded ceiling, but for the rest its magnificence is departed, the furniture consisting of the plain, useful desks and appliances of an ordinary schoolroom. This is the main schoolroom, and the large conservatory beyond serves as a classroom. Upstairs in the dormitories there is, of course, no magnificence, but plenty of homely comfort; the smaller rooms, especially, with their four or five little clean white beds and one or two cots for the "babies," pictures on the walls, and even a few knick-knacks on the mantelpiece, are more suggestive of the night nursery in a middle-class home than of the dormitory of a public institution. The bedrooms are distinguished by the names of flowers, and from the windows the children can look out upon "the fair and goodly Thames," as yet uncontaminated by the grime of the great city.

A cottage has been built in the grounds to provide extra sleeping accommodation; the laundry also is

located here. Another building, which stands apart from the rest, has a distinctly ecclesiastical appearance; it was, in fact, built for a chapel, though never used as such. This is now the children's playroom, and here in neat little cupboards they keep their personal treasures.

In the laying out of the grounds it is said that King William IV. took a deep personal interest, and that he was well pleased with the result. But it is not likely that His Majesty or any of the aristocratic occupants or visitors to Gordon House ever obtained from these beautiful grounds a tithe of the pleasure and benefit which they now afford to some of the slum children of London. The front of the house looking away from the river faces a well-kept lawn, in the middle of which is a fountain; beyond are well-wooded walks, in the midst of which nestles one of those classic summer-houses, looking like miniature temples, in which the architects of the eighteenth and the early nineteenth century delighted. The rest of the ground has been more especially adapted for the uses of the present tenants; part is left uncultivated to form the children's playground, part is a kitchen garden, and part has been parcelled out into little flower gardens, which the children cultivate with loving care.

Lest it should be thought that the Board has been grossly extravagant in providing such a palatial home for Industrial School children, it may be mentioned that the estate was acquired on very favourable terms. The freehold of the house and grounds was bought for £7000, and it is not likely that a site could have been obtained elsewhere and a suitable home and school built for anything like that sum.

And how does the new and strange environment affect the children? It would be difficult to find a more striking example of the power of environment than Gordon House affords. One little girl, when



A MAYPOLE DANCE ON THE LAWN (GORDON HOUSE GIRLS' HOME).

for the first time she crossed the marble floor of the entrance hall, asked in an awestruck whisper, "Is this the King's house?" And it may well be that the beauty and dignity of the material surroundings tend in some degree to extirpate what is mean and squalid in thought and habit. But, of course, the chief influences are the regular, healthy life, the gentle discipline, and the continuous mental and moral training.

Taken as a whole the Gordon House children, when they first come to the school, belong to the lowest type of childhood—physically, mentally and morally. Indeed, some can hardly be said to have had a childhood at all, and the first work of the home is to recover the child nature, to bring laughter to the prematurely careworn and aged little faces, and something of the healthy child's buoyancy and eagerness into the dull, inert little lives. Miss Challenger, the Superintendent, can tell some curious and sometimes tragic stories about her young charges. One of the girls had apparently never slept in a bed before she came to the home; every morning she was found curled up on the bedroom floor, and it was a long time before she could accustom herself to passing the night in the orthodox way. A little girl of six, a tramp's child, who had never had a home in her life, when first brought to the school slept for three weeks almost continuously; during all that time she never smiled nor made any response to efforts made to amuse and interest her. Often the bath is a cause of great terror to new-comers, who can never have known the comfort of personal cleanliness, and to many night-gowns and tooth-brushes are mysterious articles of which the use is quite unknown.

Most of the children who have but just come to the school have their hair cropped short, like a boy's—a grim hint of the condition in which they arrived. Some of these girls have a dull, apathetic look, others seem timid and frightened; sometimes it will take

a child a little while to get out of the habit—so sadly suggestive of former ill-treatment—of raising her arm when spoken to, as if to shield herself from a blow.

Very striking is the contrast in appearance and manner presented by those girls who have been a year or two at the school. These, for the most part, are healthy and strong in body, and bright and alert in manner; some, especially of the younger ones, are quite pretty, and all seem very happy. The upward pull of environment has overcome the downward pull of heredity; the evil bias has been worked out of their young lives. So, at least, it seems, and so we may hope. Whether the evil taint will ever reassert itself, and the girls, freed from the control of the institution, return to the degrading associations of their earliest years, and throw off the orderly and sober ways they have acquired, it is, of course, impossible to say. But the experience of the school, so far as it has yet gone, is altogether encouraging.

By Christmas 1903, twenty-six girls had left the home. Every one was respectably employed in domestic service, and every one was still in touch with the school. Photographs of nearly all these girls adorn Miss Challenger's sitting-room, and she can tell us the history of every one from the time of joining the school. As in the case of other Industrial Schools, the Board exercises some control over the scholars' movements till they reach the age of eighteen. But after that a girl is free to choose for herself. The influence of the school will still be exerted to induce her to remain in service, but against this there is often the influence of unworthy parents, who will spare no effort to get the girl home now that she is able to earn money. As a general rule the girls who have no friends are those whose future career gives least anxiety. The chief difficulties of the early years in service arise from the persecutions and importunities of so-called "friends." To urge a

girl to resist the entreaties of her own mother may seem an unnatural proceeding, but often the only hope of sobriety and respectability for a girl lies in her so resisting. There is no sadder feature in Industrial School life than this—that the most evil influence in the lives of many of the children is that of their own parents.



GETTING-UP-TIME IN THE LITTLE ONES' BEDROOM  
(GORDON HOUSE GIRLS' HOME).

The training at Gordon House is directed to making the girls capable and efficient domestic servants. Cooking and laundry work are taught on much the same lines as in the ordinary day school classes, and the big house affords plenty of opportunities for learning other branches of domestic work. Even the younger children have their little domestic duties, so that all may learn to be industrious and useful. Of course there is no difficulty in getting good places for the girls

when they leave school, nor would there be if there were twenty times as many girls available.

An additional air of homeliness is given to Gordon House by the presence of two or three "babies" ("baby" seems to be the technical name for a child who is too young to go to school). They are merry, fearless little creatures, who are everybody's pets, and to whom Miss Challenger is "Auntie." But perhaps there is some little administrative inconvenience in having children of such varied ages in the same institution. An Industrial School for little boys is shortly to be opened to accommodate boys who are too young to go to the *Shaftesbury*, and a similar plan has been proposed in regard to the girls. That, however, is a development which it will not rest with the London School Board to carry out.

The records of the London School Board have no more striking example than the story of Gordon House affords of the truth that the surest path to all social reform lies through the child. If children of the most depraved parents, reared under the very vilest of physical and moral conditions, can, by the subtle influence of a new and happier environment, be changed into bright, attractive little people with pleasant manners and right principles, and by-and-by into useful and self-respecting members of the industrial community, surely no child can be hopeless. And the problem which for thirty-three years the London School Board has been doing its best to solve—the problem of how to give every child a fair start in life—is seen to be one which holds within itself the solution to more than half the difficulties and perplexities of the complex life of to-day.



## CHAPTER XV

### DAY INDUSTRIAL SCHOOLS

DURING recent years the Board has added to its Industrial Schools a new type of school which may be regarded as a sort of compromise between the residential Industrial School and the ordinary day school. This is the Day Industrial School, at which the child is detained from 8 a.m. till 6 p.m., receiving all his meals at the school, but not being entirely withdrawn from the ordinary family life. This interesting development of the work is one on which the Board has been very slow to enter, but now that the experiment has been made, and has proved remarkably successful, we may expect a considerable extension of the system in the future—that is, if it is now safe to assume any continuity of educational administration.

The idea of the Day Industrial School was first mooted in the days of the first London School Board, when a letter was received from the Bristol School Board seeking the London Board's co-operation in a memorial to the Educational Department asking for authority—not then possessed by School Boards—to establish Day Industrial Schools. The letter was referred to the Industrial Schools Committee on 23rd May, 1873, but the committee reported adversely on the proposal. They could not see any possible advantage from such schools; parents, they argued, who could not control their children so as to make them attend school for four or five hours daily would not be

more able to make them attend for twelve hours. The line of argument shows that the committee, and the Board which adopted their views, did not appreciate the ideas on which the Day Industrial School system is founded, namely, that such a school may be made more attractive both to parents and scholars than the ordinary day school, and that children often fail to attend school for lack of just that amount of care and control during the daytime which the parents cannot or will not give, but which can be given by a Day Industrial School.

For a long time the subject seems to have dropped out of sight. But meanwhile the Education Act of 1876 had given School Boards power to establish Day Industrial Schools, and several schools had actually been started and were being conducted with considerable success in various parts of the country. These developments naturally attracted the attention of members of the Industrial Schools Committee, as well as of many teachers and managers engaged in work amongst poor and neglected children, and some of the latter approached the Board in 1890 with the suggestion that some of these special schools should be established. The subject came up for discussion before the Board in the form of a recommendation from the Industrial Schools Committee, who had been asked to report on the matter, that steps should be taken for the establishment of two Day Industrial Schools for not more than 100 children each, one on the north and one on the south side of the Thames. After referring the matter back to the committee for further information as to the working and cost of these schools, the Board, on 22nd May, 1890, passed a resolution provisionally adopting the committee's recommendation—with the exception that the numbers should not be limited to 100 children—but in view of impending legislation with regard to Industrial Schools, asked the committee to report again at the end of the Parliamentary session as to what modifications, if any, in their proposals would be

rendered necessary by new enactments respecting Industrial Schools.

Nothing came of the proposed legislation. The Industrial Schools Bill of 1890, which proposed to take Industrial School work entirely out of the hands of the School Boards, was withdrawn. But the committee did not at once proceed to the establishment of the two schools decided upon; they seemed to be weakening somewhat on the subject, and when asked by the Board in February of the following year to report what steps they had taken, replied that they had refrained from taking active steps in the matter, in view of the proposed legislation, and that they intended to report to the Board again on the subject.

No further report was however presented, and after a year's interval Mr E. Lyulph Stanley, now Lord Stanley, proposed that these dilatory tactics should end. He moved at the Board meeting on the 25th February 1892, "That the Industrial Schools Committee and the Works Committee be instructed to take immediate steps to provide two Day Industrial Schools, one on the north side and one on the south side of the Thames, in accordance with the resolution of the Board of May 22, 1890." The Board, however, on the motion of the Chairman of the Industrial Schools Committee, the Rev. Andrew Drew, referred the proposed resolution to that committee with instructions to reconsider the whole question of Day Industrial Schools, and to advise the Board whether the original proposals should be carried out.

The Industrial Schools Committee were at this time by no means unanimously in favour of these schools. Mr Drew, their chairman, was totally opposed to the scheme, and the report which the committee presented to the Board was in the nature of a compromise. They recommended that, as an experiment, one Day Industrial School should be established by the Board. But even to this proposal Mr Drew could not assent,

and when the recommendation of the majority of the committee came up for discussion at the Board meeting on the 5th May 1892, he moved that no further steps should be taken in the matter, and that the resolution of May 1890 to establish Day Industrial Schools, should be rescinded. The Board, which was very evenly divided on the subject, eventually rejected Mr Drew's motion and adopted the committee's recommendation by twenty-six votes against twenty-one.

But even yet progress towards the starting of the experimental school was very slow. The committee set to work to find a suitable building which they might adapt to their purposes. They thought they had found such a building in a disused school at Ratcliff, belonging to the Coopers' Company, but after having plans prepared of the proposed alterations, and securing the assent of the Home Office, they found it impossible to come to terms with the owner of the premises, and at last had to advise the Board to abandon the proposal to use this building. They next turned their attention to one of the Board's own buildings which seemed to be favourably situated for the purpose. The attendance at the Drury Lane Board School was steadily diminishing, and there was found to be room for all the scholars in neighbouring schools. The committee, therefore, recommended that the Board should obtain permission from the Education Department to close this school as an ordinary day school, and from the Home Office to open it as a Day Industrial School. The required permission was duly obtained, and the transformation of the school was accomplished.

A good deal of discussion was devoted to various details of administration in the proposed school. Especially the question of the nature of the religious instruction to be given formed the subject of prolonged debate; for this was the period in the Board's history when an able and zealous section was challenging at

every point the traditional undenominational policy of the Board. It must be admitted that the rules in force in the ordinary Board School might bear hardly on some in the case of an Industrial School. To the Industrial School the child goes by compulsion; to the ordinary Board School he goes voluntarily, the parents being generally able—in London at any rate—to find a denominational school for their child, if they wish. The special arrangements, therefore, which the Board agreed upon in the case of Drury Lane seem very fair to all concerned, and they have worked very satisfactorily. The neighbouring clergy were to be free to come to the school at the appointed times and give religious instruction to children belonging to their own denominations, and an Anglican and a Roman Catholic teacher were to be appointed who might give the instruction in the absence of the clergy. The vicar of the parish and the Roman Catholic priest working in the district at once availed themselves of the opportunity offered, and it is now the invariable rule to have three classes for religious teaching, one of Church of England children, one of Roman Catholics, and the third of children of other denominations who receive the ordinary undenominational instruction customary in Board Schools.

The school was opened in September 1895. It is a mixed school, accommodating 200 children, the great majority of whom are always boys. With the exception of an occasional voluntary case, all the children are committed to the school under the order of a magistrate, who in the choice of a school acts under the advice of the School Board Committee. The great majority of cases are for offences against the Education Acts, that is to say for playing truant. But there are also a few cases of children found begging, or guilty of that strange crime which disgraces the accuser more than the accused, "being beyond the control of parents." I was introduced on one occasion to two of these

terrible young savages ; one was a pale, delicate-looking little girl of about nine years of age who smiled shyly when spoken to, and answered in a whisper. The other was a boy of about the same age, a sturdy little fellow with bright, honest face and laughing eyes. He was reputed to be the terror of the neighbourhood and the despair of his long-suffering mother, but his teachers say he gives no trouble, and is, in fact, quite a promising youngster. There were also at this time a couple of boy burglars ; but they had little in common with Bill Sykes or even with the Artful Dodger ; harmless little fellows they seemed, though of an adventurous spirit. Their crime was that one night they had broken into an empty house with the intention of sleeping there. As it was after nine o'clock when the offence was committed, this was burglary in the eyes of the law, and something had to be done with the boys. They were accordingly committed by a sympathetic magistrate to the Drury Lane School, where, without being treated as criminals, a new element of regularity and order might be introduced into their wild young lives.

Obviously in such cases it is the parents of the children rather than the children themselves who are to blame ; and so we find in nearly every case—though often a charitable judgment would hesitate to blame even the parents, so cramped and handicapped are they by circumstance. In a great many cases the child has lost one or both parents ; in others the father or the mother is a drunkard, or is in prison. Here is a boy whose father goes out early in the morning to his work ; he intends the boy to go to school at nine o'clock, but there is no mother to see that he goes, and the boy prefers the freedom of the streets. Another boy has a father who is in prison ; his mother is a flower-seller and goes early in the morning to Covent Garden market ; thither also the boy often wanders before school time, and sometimes earns a few pence

holding horses or fetching breakfast for the men ; one day some little job occupies him till well after nine o'clock ; it is too late, he thinks, to go to school, and when he puts in an appearance in the afternoon he is blamed — perhaps punished — for his absence in the morning, so he determines to “chuck” school altogether. Such in many cases is the natural history of truancy.

The great merit of the Drury Lane system is that it takes account of the causes of the disease with which it has to deal. Mr Thomas Humphreys, the Governor, knows something of the history of all his young charges, and he is the last man to wish to visit the iniquities or the misfortunes of the parents upon the children. To him every child who enters the school is an individual human problem and a subject for kindness and sympathy. His first object is always to establish some human relationship with the child. It may be that the child has come in a sullen temper, prepared to meet a gaoler, but by no means to acknowledge him as a friend, or he may have the hunted, frightened air of one who feels that every man's hand is against him. In such a case, perhaps, the stern gaoler indulges in some little pleasantry, in order to make the prisoner laugh. Then, when the ice is broken, it is possible to explain that whatever the past may have been, coming to Drury Lane School means a new start in life, with new hopes and new aims.

Mr Humphreys then takes the earliest opportunity of personally visiting the home of the child and trying to obtain the sympathy and co-operation of the parents in the work he hopes to do for the child. With tact and kindness he points out what the law requires of them in the matter of their child's schooling, and often succeeds to a great extent in breaking down the prejudice which in some quarters makes “doing the School Board” an object of ambition. The curriculum adopted at Drury Lane no doubt helps towards this

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desirable result. When Tom comes home and mends the boots of the family, and when Mary makes her father a tasty steak pudding "like we make them at school," the most prejudiced parent is disposed to admit that there may be some good in the School Board after all. The industrial side of the work, which is also very popular with the children, appeals to the



IN THE LAUNDRY (DRURY LANE DAY INDUSTRIAL SCHOOL).

parents as something practical. They may not be able to see that their children have any need of grammar and such dismal sciences, but they can understand that the knowledge of shoemaking or printing may make all the difference to a boy's prospects in life. And it must be said that, though parents may be thriftless and seemingly indifferent, there are few indeed who are not grateful for real kindness and help given to their children.

Although the hours of compulsory attendance are



from 8 a.m. to 6 p.m., the children begin to arrive as early as six in the morning; until breakfast time they are free to play in the playground or swim in the swimming bath, though always under the supervision of an officer. After breakfast and the morning ablutions—an important detail—school work and industrial occupations go on concurrently till twelve o'clock; the next half-hour is devoted to drill and gymnastics; then after an interval of play comes dinner, followed by a little more play. The afternoon programme is much the same as that of the morning, except that the book learners of the morning are the hand workers of the afternoon, and *vice versa*. One is not surprised to learn that the children do not shine remarkably in the ordinary school lessons, not that they are of inferior intelligence, but their irregularity at school has made them backward, and their roving, unsteady disposition makes the concentration of attention an irksome matter. To meet this difficulty all the lessons are made very short and as interesting as possible, with the result that progress is generally satisfactory. The children are, however, far more pleased to exercise their hands than their brains, and in the industrial work many of them prove very apt pupils.

The industrial occupations engaged in by the boys are woodworking, shoemaking and printing. The printing class is a peculiarity of the Drury Lane School; the school is situated in the midst of the printing quarter of London, and it is found that good firms are pleased to take boys with some knowledge of the trade. Nothing, in fact, more clearly shows the value of the industrial training given at Drury Lane, as well as the good reputation of the school, than the fact that many more applications for boys are made at the school than there are boys available. Every boy who leaves the school has a choice of places, and though it is sometimes difficult to persuade a boy or his parents that 6s. or 7s. a week at a good trade is more to be desired

than 9s. as a van boy with the prospect of being cast adrift in two or three years, yet Mr Humphreys is able to report that of the 105 children discharged during the school year 1902-03, good and prospective employment was found for 87.

The girls receive a very thorough training in laundry work, and as a result several of them have been able to obtain good situations in laundries. But the training of the girls includes a great deal more than it is possible to put into a syllabus, being designed in a most practical spirit to supply as far as may be the deficiencies of their own home training. Mr Humphreys, in his report for the year 1902, has some suggestive remarks on this subject. "The difficulty," he says, "of transforming the slatternly girl of the slum into the neat, tidy and capable domestic servant is far greater than that of turning a wayward lad into a steady workman. The teaching of darning and mending, patching of clothes and re-making of garments has been tried, and the girls enjoy the change from book-learning. How to make a bed, how to lay a fire, how to clean a lamp, how to dust, how to keep a room airy, how to wash linen, how to buy food and how to cook it, how to treat the baby, and how to feed it and keep it clean—these are some of the 'hows' we try to teach all our girls, and on more than one occasion I have myself been delighted to observe the 'motherliness' of some of the elder girls, and the ability with which they have been able to prepare and serve up the dishes cooked in their own homes for their parents, brothers and sisters."

As far as possible the domestic teaching is carried out with such simple appliances as the children might have in their own home. Often they will cook a dinner at an open grate, and they will go out and purchase at the local shops provisions for use in the school. A spirit of emulation amongst the girls gives zest to this marketing, and the only case of cheating Mr Humphreys could tell me of was that of a little girl who had reported her

cabbages as costing a penny less than they actually cost, thus cheating herself in order to make it appear she had driven a better bargain than her schoolfellow.

Great attention is paid to physical culture and to the general health of the children. Physical exercises form part of the daily curriculum, both for boys and girls, and lately the introduction of portable gymnastic



PREPARING THE DINNER (DRURY LANE DAY INDUSTRIAL SCHOOL).

apparatus has provided the boys with a variant to dumb-bell and wand drill which they greatly appreciate. The swimming bath, though small, is sufficient for the purpose, and few boys or girls leave the school without learning to swim. A careful record is kept of the weight and measurements of children at the time of entry into the school and at intervals afterwards. The majority when they join the school are very poor specimens physically; comparatively few are really healthy, well-formed children. But the abundance of good, plain

food, combined with plenty of healthful exercise, often effects a striking change. A little boy of ten will add  $1\frac{1}{2}$  or even 2 inches to his chest girth in a few months, and some of the children gain three or four pounds in weight within a fortnight of their admission. There could hardly be a more striking demonstration of the physical degeneration resulting from the wretched conditions under which life is lived by the poor of our great cities.

The food, though quite plain, is unstinted in quantity, and undoubtedly proves one of the chief attractions of the school. To very many of these children three square meals a day is a condition of quite unwonted luxury. The dinners consist of roast or stewed meat with vegetables two or three times a week, pudding twice, and fish on Fridays. Sometimes on Saturday, which is a half-holiday, the *menu* consists of bread and cheese and onions, a favourite repast, but, for obvious reasons, not to be indulged in when there is afternoon school to follow. The food, it should be pointed out, is not provided free of charge. In the order for the committal of the child the amount which the parents are to pay is stated; this varies from 6d. to 2s. a week, according to the circumstances of the parents, and the payments are energetically enforced.

And what is the outcome of all this care and hard work on behalf of London's street Arabs? As regards the immediate object of securing regular school attendance, it has succeeded beyond the most sanguine expectations. The licensing-out system prevails here as in the Truant Schools. Every Friday someone from the Drury Lane School visits the schools attended by the children on license and receives a report as to their attendance during the week. Mr Humphreys frequently pays this visit himself, in order that he may see the children and receive, in addition to the formal report, the teachers' account of their progress. He is thus enabled to continue to a great extent the personal

influence over the children gained while they were under his charge. If the attendance report is unsatisfactory, the license is liable to be revoked and the child recommitted to Drury Lane or sent to a Truant School. But this is rarely necessary. In the majority of cases orderly and regular ways of life have now become a habit; school attendance is no longer the difficult and painful matter it formerly was, and the children are not only among the most regular, but in very many cases the teachers report that they are quite up to the average as regards intelligence, progress and good conduct.

According to the report for the year ended Lady-day 1903, there were at that time 91 children on the roll of the Drury Lane School who were attending neighbouring day schools on license. During the whole year the licenses of only two boys had to be cancelled on account of irregular attendance, and the average attendance of the licensees for the year was 98.4 per cent. of the total possible attendances. Seeing that the average attendance for all the London Board Schools is only about 86 per cent., and that these licensees are children who a little while before could not be induced to attend school at all, such a result must be accounted remarkably satisfactory.

If the Drury Lane School did nothing but convert some scores of truants every year into regular attendants at school, it might be held to have justified its existence, though this would seem a poor return for so great an expenditure of energy. But its work has results deeper and more abiding than that, though not so easy to tabulate. There are indications of an all-round moral improvement in the scholars, which are very cheering. The visitor can hardly be otherwise than favourably impressed with the appearance and demeanour of the scholars. Not that they are smartly dressed; the clothes are in all stages of dilapidation, often they were obviously not made for the wearer,

collars are few, and boots sometimes will hardly hold together. But all the children are personally clean. The Board has power to wash, but not to clothe, its day scholars. Remembering, too, that these children are supposed to be the wildest in London, as they certainly are among the poorest, it is pleasant to note the air of orderliness which is yet combined with a good deal of freedom. There is little to suggest the institutional life. The spirit of the adventurous London urchin is chastened but not broken. At dinner time the children fall to the work in hand with cheerful energy, but with due regard to the conventions of civilised society; in the playground their games have all the abandon of their unregenerate days, with just a little of the rough edge worn off. The little doorkeeper who admits you to the building is an unmistakable street Arab, albeit a clean one, but he greets you with a polite salute, military in essence, but of something less than military stiffness, and if you speak to any of the children you will almost certainly get a civil and intelligent answer.

Nor is the improvement merely a matter of appearance. Some of the children seem to have, when they come to the school, an undeveloped or distorted moral sense, which shows itself sometimes in curious ways. Mr Humphreys told me the case of a boy he sent out one morning to buy a newspaper at a neighbouring newsagent's. The boy returned with the paper and triumphantly presented also a copy of a sixpenny illustrated periodical. "I don't want that," said Mr Humphreys, supposing it was sent by mistake or to solicit an order, "you must take it back." "It's all right, sir," said the young hopeful. "I pinched it when Mrs—— wasn't looking." Here you have both the poison and the antidote; the moral obliquity which cannot see the sinfulness of stealing, and the desire to give pleasure to the Governor, which may become the motive for right-doing.

By way of contrast take another incident. One of the dinners to the poor in celebration of the King's Coronation took place at the Drury Lane School, and the children helped as waiters. After the function was over two of the gentlemen organising the affair expressed their surprise to Mr Humphreys that money gifts they had offered to two of the boys had been respectfully declined. Here was another standard of conduct, a phenomenally high one this time, and here again it is probable that the leading motive was the reflection that in accepting money they had not earned they would be doing something that would displease the Governor.

There is no doubt that it is the power of kindness and sympathy and a genuine personal interest which work the moral reformation. Notwithstanding the rough character of the scholars, there is less punishment in this school than in the ordinary Board School. Blows and harshness are things with which most of these children are unhappily familiar; but kindness and sympathy are new and strange influences in their lives to which they rarely fail to respond. "Nearly every boy," says Mr Humphreys, "on his admission looks upon each officer in very much the same light as a policeman; and for the officers to show kindness is to completely turn, outflank and neutralise his whole line of defence, and to assail him where he expected no attack." Under the gentle and kindly, though firm, control of Mr Humphreys and his staff the wild young Ishmaelite begins to see that society has a duty to him, and that there are those who recognise it; and so he has a duty to society. Or if his philosophy is not equal to reasoning the matter out in this way, he nevertheless yields to the quiet power of the new influence, and does many things and abstains from doing many others, because he will not willingly give pain to those he has come to regard with respect, even with affection.

And it is the same when they go out from the school. They are not lost sight of. Periodical visits are paid to them at home or at their places of business, and they come in great numbers to the school to seek Mr Humphreys' advice, or merely to pay a friendly call. Mr Humphreys knows the whereabouts and more or less of the history of hundreds of "Old Boys," and he is able to report that there are very few of them whom he regards as failures. Nor does it appear that even these are necessarily failures in the deep moral sense; they are only casual and unsteady in their work. "On the other hand," says Mr Humphreys (I quote again from his interesting report for 1902), "I have spent many happy hours with our Old Boys, and have found them exceedingly grateful. If an Old Boy is a carpenter, he brings me useful or ornamental specimens of his handiwork, or an original design; if a printer, I receive some artistic display work; if a shoemaker, leather purses and braces. From South Africa I have been sent Kruger coins and sjamboks by Old Boys who have joined the army. From India I received a consignment of two horned heads, upon which I had to pay £2, 7s. carriage it is true; but they were the kindly meant gift of an Old Boy who took the only means he had of returning what he was pleased to consider our kindness. My only terror is lest he should continue sending such trophies. Another of our ex-scholars who was 'the terror of the neighbourhood,' but who cultivated intelligence whilst selling newspapers, was at a later stage of development sent to this school, and though but a poor scholar, was extremely fond of woodwork. At the age of fourteen he entered the mercantile navy as carpenter's boy, and last January was appointed chief carpenter on the Royal Mail steamship *Avon*. Not every Drury Lane boy will be 'Admiral in the King's Navee,' or even master carpenter in a mercantile vessel, but the incident shows that schools of this kind are opening free careers



to talent which might otherwise have been lost or worse than lost to the community." Another Old Boy who went to sea has obtained his certificate, and is serving as third mate in a good steamship line.

The introduction of a brass band—a recent innovation and an immensely popular one with the boys—will be the means, it is hoped, of enabling some of the restless lads, who do not take kindly to handicrafts, to obtain positions in army bands directly they leave school, and so escape the danger of falling into indolent and loafing ways.

The great success of the work at Drury Lane has encouraged the Board to start further Day Industrial Schools. A school at Poplar was opened for this purpose in September 1901, and a third school at Nine Elms was opened in April 1902. These schools are being conducted on the same lines as the Drury Lane school. But it is early yet to speak of their results, though both have made an excellent start. H.M. Inspector in his first annual report on the new school at Brunswick Road, Poplar, bears this striking testimony: "I believe that some of the most remarkable social work in the whole country is now being done here and at Drury Lane. Were there more such schools, or were more schools in poor neighbourhoods run on the lines of these, the hooligan of the future would be a mere freak."

While the experience of the Drury Lane School and, so far as it has gone, of the newer schools is an emphatic justification of the system of Day Industrial Schools, it also shows how largely the personal factor enters into the question of success or failure. The Board has been specially fortunate in securing for its pioneer school the services of such a large-hearted and zealous worker for the children as Mr Humphreys. And in the Chairman of the Managers, Mrs Dibdin, the children have another most devoted and sympathetic friend, who knows every one of them by

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name and takes quite a motherly interest in them all. If the new education authority should have the good fortune to enlist the services of others who will bring the same spirit and the same devotion to the work, there seems no reason why the system of Day Industrial Schools should not be widely extended and prove one of the chief of the uplifting forces at work amongst the poor of London. But those who would really and permanently help the London gutter child must labour in no mere official spirit, but with an abounding measure of Faith, Hope and Charity—"and the greatest of these is Charity."

## CHAPTER XVI

### SCHOOLS FOR THE BLIND

AMONG the hundreds of thousands of children in London for whose education the London School Board is responsible, it must be evident that there are many who by reason of bodily or mental infirmity are unfitted to receive instruction in the ordinary schools. For such children special schools and special methods of teaching have to be provided. Such provision has been among the later developments of School Board work.

Although from quite early days some amount of thought and discussion was given to the needs of the blind and deaf, the energies of the first two School Boards were so fully occupied in making provision for the great mass of the normal, healthy children, whose educational needs had been too long neglected, that they could do very little to meet special and exceptional needs. But when the needs of the lusty and strong had been in some degree satisfied, it was possible to listen to the feebler appeal of the blind, the deaf, the crippled, and the mentally infirm, who could not take their place in the jostling throng that pressed into the ordinary schools. Little by little special provision was made for these afflicted classes, until to-day there is a most elaborate system of special schools, carefully organised, admirably, even lavishly equipped, and providing education adapted to the special needs of nearly 4000 children, who, for one reason or another,

are incapable of benefiting by the instruction given in the ordinary schools. The ideal of educational provision for every child in London capable of receiving instruction has not even yet been quite realised, but it is well within sight.

The first hint the official records contain of any consideration being given to the special needs of the blind is found in the Minutes for April 1873, where we read of a letter having been received from a father asking if the Board could help him with the education of his blind child. A little later we find the Board inquiring, through a committee, into the existing provision for the education of blind children. The inquiry showed that more than half the blind children of London were in institutions for the blind, and that some of the others received some degree of instruction at home from the visiting teachers of the Society for Providing Home Teaching for the Blind. It was decided that every effort should be made to encourage blind children to attend the sighted schools, and that the services of the Society just mentioned should be accepted for providing them with special instruction. Shortly afterwards the Board appointed a visiting teacher of its own. This rather make-shift arrangement continued for several years.

A step forward was taken in 1879 when, with the sanction of the Education Department, special centres were established and furnished with suitable books and appliances, the children attending the ordinary schools for part of the day. Under this system a considerable proportion of the blind children of London were gathered into the schools and some useful work was done. But in order to bring the centres within reach of as many blind children as possible, they had to be kept very small, with some consequent loss of efficiency; and even so there remained many children who were not near enough to any centre to make it possible for them to attend.

The Blind and Deaf Act of 1893 made it obligatory upon parents to cause a blind or deaf child to receive suitable education, even though there might be no special school near the child's home; and it allowed the education authority, as an alternative to putting a school near the child's home, to bring the home near the school. The children might be boarded out with foster parents living near the school, their own parents contributing towards the expense according to their means. This made it possible to reduce the number of centres and increase their size.

The boarding-out system is still pretty generally adopted both for the blind and the deaf; 7s. or 8s. a week is paid by the Board to the foster parents for each child boarded out. On the whole the system works well; foster parents often become much attached to their little charges, and treat them exceedingly well. But in many of the most populous parts of London the housing conditions of the working-class population are so bad that it is sometimes difficult to find accommodation which is thoroughly satisfactory from a sanitary point of view. It is often found better, if the child's own home is a fairly good one and the distance is not too great, to provide a guide to conduct the blind child to and from school. In such cases the Board pays travelling expenses; the guide chosen is generally a child attending the ordinary school to which the blind centre is attached. Blind teachers are also, when necessary, provided with guides at the Board's expense.

There are now about 250 blind children on the rolls of the London Board Schools, and the specially equipped centres, which they attend now for the whole of the school day, accommodate from twenty to forty children each. Attendance is compulsory between the ages of five and sixteen. Blind children are often very bright and clever, and make most apt pupils. But when they first come to school they seem to be a feeble folk indeed, with frail little bodies which from want of

exercise have not developed like those of seeing children of their own age, and minds which, from the same cause, seem to be in a state of stagnation. In the ordinary working-class home there is very little occupation for the blind child, and it is often in the best homes that the blind child has the poorest chance of development. For his parents, with mistaken kindness, shelter him in every possible way, treating him as quite helpless, and attending to his every want. So that it often happens that a blind child, when he first comes to school, is afraid to walk across a room alone, is almost too shy and timid to talk, it may be has hardly even learned to feed himself, and in point of general information is not in advance of a sighted child of two or three years of age.

The first thing, therefore, to be done with many of the little blind children is not so much to teach them reading and writing as to make them self-reliant. They are taught to find things in cupboards and to take messages from one room to another; they go out to play with the other children, and never have anything done for them which they can do for themselves. And it is astonishing how soon, in the stimulating atmosphere of the school, the dormant faculties awake. The shy, timid child becomes inquisitive, self-reliant, fearless, even adventurous. It is rather terrifying to the observer to see some of the blind children running about the school playground. But they come to surprisingly little harm; the child who looks as if he will run right into a wall, stops short in time, warned by the difference in the sound of his footsteps. A ladder left by workmen offers an almost irresistible temptation to some of the blind boys to explore the unknown heights to which it leads. Getting lost has no terrors for them; on the contrary it is a delightfully exciting experience. A little boy who lost his bearings in the school playground returned after a while to his teacher, glowing with excitement. He had happened upon a short flight of steps,

and, impelled by the spirit that drove Columbus across the Atlantic, had followed them into the unknown. Entering a room, he had met a gentleman with whom he passed the time of day, and who invited him to come again. He had penetrated into the sanctum of the headmaster of the boys' school adjoining the blind centre. Two boys were found by a teacher at the bottom of a pit in the playground in cheerful converse with the workmen engaged on some drainage work. They were not hurt, and, finding that the strange place into which they had fallen was inhabited, they were quite averse from leaving it. We pity the blind and rightly, but for the children, at any rate, their affliction has its compensations. Theirs is a magic world, where new and strange discoveries are always being made, and where unexpected things are always happening. "I trod on our cat on the stairs this morning, and thought it was a black beetle," said a little girl to her teacher. Another child was surprised to find that a horse's head was higher than her own; she had pictured a horse as about the size of a large dog. So they live in a world of surprises, and are continually adjusting their notions of things in the light of new experiences. Models of animals and other common objects are kept at the school, but of course they cannot all be actual size, and it is always a difficult matter to convey to the blind correct ideas of relative size.

Reading is taught on the Braille system, and blind children learn to read quite as fast by the sense of touch as others by the sense of sight. Writing consists in embossing the Braille characters on stout paper with the aid of a stile and a writing frame. Arithmetic is done by means of types, something like printer's types, which are inserted in a perforated metal surface, the position of the type indicating its numerical value. Geography is studied with the aid of relief maps and globes.

In these ordinary school subjects the blind child

keeps pretty well abreast of the sighted child of the same age. The reading is as fluent and expressive, the arithmetic as quick and accurate as in the ordinary school—mental arithmetic probably more so. Object lessons are given, but the objects have to be such as can be passed round and handled; the most popular are those which can afterwards be eaten.

Of very great importance in the education of blind children are the "occupations," which are designed to develop sensitiveness of touch and suppleness of fingers—the faculties on which the ability of the blind to earn their own living very largely depends. Beadwork, paper-weaving, straw-plaiting to make baskets, sewing—beginning with large stitches in wool and leading gradually to the finest work—wool mat-making and chair-caning are the occupations generally taught.

If anyone should suppose that the limitation of the physical faculties makes the school life of the blind or the deaf particularly irksome, he would make a great mistake. There are probably no schools in London which are more appreciated by their scholars than are the School Board "special schools." The normal child may wish to stay away from school because he has, or thinks he has, more pleasant ways of spending the time; but the deaf, the blind and the crippled are almost without resources outside their school life, and by them enforced absence from school would be regarded as a real calamity. Blind children ask for holiday tasks; they want to take their Braille reading books and writing frames home, and they have been known to petition for school to be held on Saturday. There is also another factor in the popularity of the special schools. The classes are very small, as instruction is necessarily to a great extent individual, and so the personal relationship between teacher and taught is much closer and more intimate than in the ordinary school. Out of this intimacy grows mutual sympathy, even affection; thus it is generally a warm and friendly



atmosphere in which the school life of the blind, the deaf and the crippled is passed.

Until recently the blind centres have generally been taught by blind teachers with one or more sighted assistants. The blind, no doubt, make very sympathetic teachers of the blind, and the profession affords one of the few opportunities for earning a comfortable livelihood that are open to educated blind people. But the arrangement has obvious disadvantages, of which perhaps the most serious is the difficulty of maintaining discipline, and it is now the almost universal practice for the head teacher of a blind school to be a sighted person.

During the last few years the organisation of the blind and deaf work of the London School Board has been greatly improved. It had previously suffered from some want of uniformity and continuity of plan. The Board has lately appointed a new organiser, Mr B. P. Jones, for all the blind and deaf schools, and under his direction several important developments have lately taken place. The chief of these has been the establishment of residential schools for elder scholars, where technical training of a more advanced character than would be practicable at a day school can be given. It is recognised that the generally sound educational principle of training a child's faculties, and leaving him to learn his particular trade or calling after he has left school, must not be pushed too far in the case of the physically afflicted. If these children are to earn their own living at all, they must be given a good start on the road while they are still at school.

The Board acquired the freehold of Elm Court, Tulse Hill, a pleasantly situated private house, with a large garden and orchard attached, and after necessary alterations had been made, this was opened on June 2, 1902, as a home for blind girls from twelve to sixteen years of age. There are at present twenty resident and two or three day pupils, but it is proposed



TEA ON THE LAWN AT ELM COURT, TULSE HILL.

ultimately to increase the accommodation for boarders to about forty-five. Elm Court is a beautiful home in every way. The household arrangements are admirable, and the comfort and health of the girls seem to have been studied in every possible way. The fine old wooded garden and the orchard beyond are a continual delight, for though the girls cannot see the beauty of the scene, they can breathe the pure, fresh air, walk and play on the soft grass, and listen to the singing of the birds in the trees. But even pleasanter to notice than the material comforts is the homely, happy air of the place. The girls had at the time of my visit a kind, motherly matron in Mrs Hartland, whom, however, they have since lost, as she has accepted another appointment under the Board. One cannot be long with the girls at Elm Court without being sure that they are very happy. To watch them in the garden during playtime—some walking in twos and threes, others romping, perhaps even chasing each other; or at tea on the lawn in summer time; or engaged in a singing game in the orchard; or sitting round the matron, or their teacher, Miss Rothwell, while an interesting story is being read to them, is to receive a striking object lesson in the triumph of a happy spirit over the infirmities of the flesh. Some of the girls can see a little, and these help those who are totally blind. But all alike seem as happy as the day is long, and one of the most cheerful people I ever saw is a girl at Elm Court, who, besides being quite blind, is paralysed on one side, so that one arm is quite helpless, and one leg is lame.

It is interesting to note how completely these elder girls have outgrown the nervous, timorous ways that we have noted as characterising blind children when they first come to school. Most of them have the bright, open, fearless manner of the healthy, modern schoolgirl. They live very largely in the open air, have plenty of good food, and spend a good deal of time at physical exercises and gymnastics; they delight in

boys' books, especially books about boys who get into mischief, and some have just a touch of the "tomboy" in their composition.

The present school premises are rather poor, being in fact a billiard-room and a coach-house. But these are merely temporary; it is intended, as soon as the necessary arrangements can be made, to go out to



WOOL RUG-MAKING AT ELM COURT, TULSE HILL.

school to an ordinary blind centre, using Elm Court as a home only.

As a great aim of the school is to fit the girls for earning their own living, special attention is paid to the technical teaching, which occupies about half the working week. Chair caning and basket work are taught by a mechanic, and knitting, sewing, wool rug-making and typewriting by the ordinary teachers. The girls also learn cooking and laundry work at one of the Board's domestic economy centres. These

might seem dangerous occupations for blind girls, but they are found quite able to do the work without accident. As they also make their own beds, and perform many other domestic duties in the home, they become very capable and independent little housewives.

Side by side with this special work designed to make the girls independent and useful when they leave school, ordinary book work is continued. Some of the girls show very good taste in literature. They are very fond, for instance, of the *Idylls of the King*, and when I was at the school in July 1903 the first class were busily writing out *Guinevere* from dictation, hoping to finish it before the holidays. The Braille sheets, when finished, would be fastened together and form a book that they could read again and again, a valued addition to their personal possessions. Braille books are expensive, and not very numerous, so that the girls like to manufacture their own. They have a small library of standard works, which is well patronised, for all the pupils at Elm Court are well past the stage when reading was a matter of difficulty. But their great delight is to be read to, and often of an evening Miss Rothwell will read to them while they work at rug-making or knitting. At meal times too, and all sorts of odd times, the matron will read aloud some story of adventure, or of healthy domestic interest. So that these sightless girls become, probably, more familiar with books than average seeing children of their own age. Miss Rothwell reads the newspaper to them from time to time, so that they are kept informed of the march of events from day to day, and they carry on a regular correspondence with sighted children in a Lancashire school. Thus the ideal of life which they form for themselves is of a busy, varied life, pulsating with interest, and touching the seeing world at many points—the very antithesis of the cloistered and secluded existence which is so often the lot of the physically afflicted.

In intellectual keenness and in general information the girls at Elm Court would compare very well with those in the upper classes of any ordinary Board School. They have competed successfully with sighted children at the annual Scripture examination, and in the essay-writing competition promoted by the Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals. At my request, several of the girls wrote an account of a day in their life at Elm Court. The papers are interesting as examples of typewriting and of composition, as well as for the glimpse of the daily routine as seen from the girls' standpoint. The typewriting in several cases is quite equal in neatness and accuracy to that of the average sighted typist, and suggests the possibility of typewriting from dictation becoming a means of livelihood for some of the better-educated blind girls. I transcribe one of the essays without alteration, except that a few words are omitted, and a few sentences added from other papers to make the day's record more complete:—

“This is an account of how we spend Monday at Elm Court. We get up at half-past six, and after washing and having our hair done, some of us have a little work to do before breakfast. My work is to take up the mats that we have beside our beds, and roll them up. Then if the other girls are not ready we wait and all come down together. We have a few minutes to walk round the garden before breakfast, which we have at a quarter to eight generally. At breakfast-time, when it is fine, we are on the lawn to hear the birds sing. It is lovely to be out there. We have prayers and a hymn before breakfast. After breakfast one girl stays down to clear, and the rest of us go upstairs to make our beds. Then we put on our boots and do what we like till school-time, when Mrs Hartland rings a bell and we get in a line in front of the playroom, and Mrs Hartland sees if we are tidy. Before play-time in school, the lessons we have are Scripture, mental arithmetic and ordinary arithmetic. Then we have a quarter of an hour's recess, which, when it is fine, we spend

in the orchard. Then after play we have geography, reading and composition, which some of us do in typewriting. We have dinner at a quarter past twelve and finish about one o'clock. Then from one till twenty to two we are read to in the orchard. Then we go up to the house to prepare for school. On Monday afternoons I go to Mr Cheek, a gentleman who comes to teach us basket-making. Then we have



A TYPE-WRITING CLASS AT ELM COURT, TULSE HILL.

prayers, and leave school at half-past four. We do what we like till five, then we have tea; then, as we do not have evening school on Monday, we go into the orchard and do what we please until eight o'clock, at which time we go to bed. After nine we are not supposed to speak."

A school which aims at doing a similar work for elder blind boys was opened in December 1902, at Linden Lodge, a pleasant house overlooking Wandsworth Common. The house, which accommodates forty

boarders and about ten day scholars has interesting educational associations, having been at one time the residence of Sir John Gorst, and afterwards a blind school under voluntary management. It is not quite an ideal building for teaching purposes, but it makes a very comfortable home. There is a large garden, which supplies the house with vegetables, besides providing a pleasant recreation ground for the boys. On part of the garden the Board has built a fine gymnasium and technical classrooms. The trade chiefly taught is basket-making, and the excellence and variety of the work which the boys turn out gives good promise of many of them being able to earn their living at the trade. Bent iron work and woodwork are also taught; the former may possibly be turned to commercial account by a few of the lads, but the woodworking exercises are regarded purely as manual training, as there is no likelihood of a blind boy ever qualifying in carpentry or joinery. Some of the boys also learn typewriting.

While many of the boys at Linden Lodge are bright and intelligent, and are making good progress, there are two or three who, by reason of some additional infirmity — deafness, epilepsy or mental weakness — require special care. For these boys and for other similarly difficult cases the Board has proposed to start a special resident school, so that even the most heavily afflicted may have a chance of receiving some degree of education.

The opening of this school for abnormal blind cases will put the coping stone to the edifice which the London School Board has been slowly building up for many years in the interests of London's blind children.



## CHAPTER XVII

### SCHOOLS FOR THE DEAF

THE education of deaf children presents even greater difficulties than the education of the blind, though the conditions of the problem are not so generally appreciated. The deaf, unlike the blind and the crippled, are so entirely normal in appearance that the reality and seriousness of their disability are apt to be overlooked. The first and greatest difficulty which faces the teacher, when he begins the education of a congenitally deaf child, is the fact that there is no effective means of communication between them. They are like two people in distant towns wishing to communicate by telephone; the fact that one is not conversant with the use of the telephone matters little, —he will soon learn; but the absence of telephonic connection between the towns is a more serious matter. So with the deaf child, an artificial medium of communication must be established before messages from the hearing world can be received in the silent land in which he dwells.

It is not his deafness, but the fact that he has no language, which so completely isolates the deaf child from his fellows and makes him so difficult to teach. He does not know the names of the commonest objects, and it is difficult to conceive what his mental processes must be, so closely does thought seem to be related to language. Mental stagnation would seem to be inevitable in those who are cut off from the stimulating

influence of communication with their fellows. The dull, apathetic air, which I have already pointed out as characterising many little blind children when they first come to school, is at least equally noticeable in the case of deaf children. Many such children have in the past been regarded as weak-minded or imbecile, and even confined in idiot asylums, because no one knew how to hold communication with them, though in reality their brains were perfectly healthy. The late Mr T. King, the senior chief inspector of schools, mentioned in a recent report cases of deaf children being withdrawn from an institution for idiots and sent to a school for the deaf, and proving bright and intelligent and quite equal in mental capacity to other children. It will be seen, therefore, that however difficult the work of educating the deaf may be, it is one to which an educational authority ought to give most earnest attention, for there are probably no members of the community who are so dependent upon education for their happiness and well-being as are the deaf.

There are, of course, many degrees of deafness among school children, from the slight hardness of hearing which led a child to describe the Equator as an "imaginary *lion* running round the earth" to the absolute deafness which cannot hear the shrillest whistle or the loudest peal of thunder. The children for whom the School Board has to make provision in special schools are those who are too deaf to receive instruction in the ordinary schools. There are about 600 such children under the care of the London School Board, and of these the majority are congenitally deaf—so-called deaf mutes—who have neither hearing nor language, the minority being children who have become deaf after acquiring some power of speech, though it may be very little, and who may or may not have a little hearing.

The special teaching of deaf children under the

London School Board was begun in September 1874, when a class was started for four or five deaf children at a Bethnal Green school. At that time authorities on the teaching of the deaf were much divided as to the relative advantages of the sign and finger spelling system and the oral system, which consists in teaching speech and lip-reading. At Bethnal Green a compromise between the two systems was adopted, speech and finger spelling being taught at the same time. But this was not a fair test for either system, and in 1877 a pure oral school was opened as an experiment. Since 1880 the sign system has been abandoned, and all the deaf schools of the Board, with one exception, of which more will be said, are now taught on the oral system. There is no doubt that good educational results have been obtained by both systems, but the oral system goes further than any other to lessen the tragic isolation of the deaf. It enables them, as no other system could, to take their place in the hearing world, and communicate by the ordinary method of speech with their hearing neighbours.

The age of compulsory attendance for the deaf is from seven to sixteen. But there are several children at the deaf centres who are younger than seven, and the sooner they begin the better. It is very interesting to watch the first steps in the deaf child's education. The methods are much the same at all the centres, but we will take for our example the deaf centre at Cavendish Road, Balham, where the head teacher, Miss Brown, is specially successful with little children, and is working rather more on Kindergarten lines than the teachers at some of the other schools.

In the beginners' class we find six or seven little children varying in age from four to eight years. The teacher is trying to impart the rudiments of language; her object is to enable each of these little children who cannot hear a single sound, and before coming to school had no language whatever, to pronounce all

the sounds in the English language, and to recognise them when spoken and when written. A sufficiently difficult task, yet, thanks to the natural imitativeness of children, less difficult than one might suppose. The child moves his lips as the teacher moves hers, and, putting one hand to the teacher's throat and another to his own, he feels the movements of the



DEAF CHILDREN LEARNING TO SPEAK (CAVENDISH ROAD SCHOOL).

vocal organs and imitates them with his own. A mirror is sometimes used to enable the child to compare the motion of his own lips with those of the teacher. As the sound is pronounced the letter or letters representing it are written on the blackboard. As soon as a few vowel and consonant sounds are known, they are combined to form words. Thus, the teacher makes the hissing sound of "s," the child does the same, and "s" is written on the blackboard; "aw,"

says the teacher, and the child, after several attempts, perhaps, and using the mirror to test the position of the lips, reproduces the sound correctly, and "aw" is written on the board. The sounds only, not the names of the letters, are learned at this stage. The two sounds are now spoken together, and a new word has been learned. But not quite; how should a deaf child know what a "saw" is? The object must be drawn on the board, or, better still, produced and handled. The lesson is not likely then to be forgotten.

As soon as a few words are known, they are combined to form sentences. In the next class sentence making is going on merrily, and here something like a conversation is possible, though it has to be kept within the limits of a very narrow vocabulary.

"Give me a book," says the teacher. A scholar does so.

"What colour is that book?"

"That book is brown."

"Is the door open?" A boy goes to open the door, showing that he has only lip-read part of the sentence. The question is repeated, and this time the answer is correct: "No. The door is not open." And so, by simple question and answer, the lesson proceeds, each lesson introducing a few new words or grammatical forms.

Not very much can be done at these early stages in the way of imparting information, except, indeed, that general information about common things which the hearing child acquires almost insensibly. But every lesson helps to increase the vocabulary and the facility in lip-reading. All sorts of pleasant means are devised for making the language lessons agreeable as well as memorable. The conversations centre round objects which can be seen and handled, and as far as possible they are illustrated by pantomimics into which the children enter with much spirit. Part of the playground is laid out in small garden plots, which have to be

tended, and, of course, talked about. Silkworms are watched at their fascinating occupation, and several birds and a tame rat are on permanent duty at the school. Sometimes a child's birthday will be celebrated by a tea-party; invitations will be written and delivered, one child will go shopping, and the feast will be partaken of with conversation appropriate to the occasion.



THE TEA-PARTY: A LANGUAGE LESSON AT CAVENDISH ROAD SCHOOL.

Drawing and various manual occupations designed to train the hand and eye are introduced from the very beginning. The exercise books of the younger children contain simple sentences and rough pictures, often very interesting and amusing, in coloured chalk. These are regarded not as artistic work, but as a means of impressing the meaning of the words written. With many of the deaf children drawing soon becomes quite a mode of expression, a useful means of supplementing

their limited vocabulary. Even very little children draw flowers from nature, and those a little older make original designs based on the flower forms. They also practise modelling in clay, and at Cavendish Road the school rat has more than once played the part of model at these lessons. Altogether the artistic work of the deaf schools compares very favourably with that of the ordinary schools.

An exercise peculiar to the deaf schools is the making of simple models with strips of thin wood. This forms a link between the Kindergarten exercises of the youngest children and the ordinary work of the manual training centre, the idea being that the cultivation of hand-skill is specially important in the case of deaf boys, who will probably earn their living at some kind of handicraft.

It is pleasant to see the eager interest of the children in their work. Speaking must always be a matter of more or less effort to the deaf; signing is to them the natural and easy thing. And the great advantage of teaching speech from the earliest years is seen at Cavendish Road in the readiness of some of the children to speak spontaneously to their teachers, and even to the stranger within their gates. A little girl about six years of age, who probably had but a few score words in her vocabulary, buttonholed me as soon as I entered the classroom, and pointing proudly to her straw plaiting, said, "Eva made it." I noticed too that some of the children were talking to each other out of school by means of the lips, though without sound.

It is a little difficult to realise how heavy a task lies before the deaf and dumb child in the mere acquisition of his native language. It is, of course, a matter of far greater difficulty than the learning of a foreign language would be to a hearing child. The mistakes the deaf make in speaking and writing suggest, to some extent, the nature of their difficulties. Sentences get distorted and words curiously misused. "I had bread and fire

for breakfast," said one child, meaning that she had toast. Another said that she had had for a birthday present "a pail and sweep," meaning a broom. It is inevitable, therefore, that in educational attainments the deaf child should remain for years far behind the hearing child of his own age. But the gulf between them is gradually narrowed, and the more the deaf child advances in



A CLAY MODELLING CLASS AT CAVENDISH ROAD SCHOOL.  
(The boy at the end of the table is holding a tame rat, which forms the model.)

knowledge of language, the greater becomes his power of acquiring information. After he reaches the point of being able to read an ordinary book with ease and pleasure, progress is rapid, and there is, of course, no theoretical reason against his attaining eventually to the highest degree of culture.

But the whole system of education is directed not so much to the fostering of bookish and scholarly tastes in a few exceptional pupils as to fitting the great mass



of the scholars to earn their own living at some handicraft, and to share the ordinary social life of men and women of their own class. This is why lip-reading and language, with clear articulation, are of such supreme importance in the training of deaf children. Very much depends upon the co-operation of parents, and, in the case of boarded-out children, of foster parents. If the child speaks and lip-reads in school, but only signs at home, his progress is inevitably retarded. It is difficult to get people to understand that it is any use speaking to a deaf child. The teachers, therefore, are doing their utmost to impress upon all who have to deal with deaf children the importance of talking to them and making them talk. With this end in view receptions and demonstrations are given once a month at the deaf centres, and to these parents and foster parents are invited that they may see the methods of teaching and something of its possibilities.

The expectations of parents as to what the school should do for their children seem to vary greatly. "I should be so thankful," said one woman, "if you could only teach my child to say 'mother.'" On the other hand, another woman called at one of the schools in a state of great indignation to complain that her son was not getting on at all well. She had sent him out to buy a bloater and he did not know what a bloater was. The teacher did not reply, as a pedant might have done, that the characteristics of bloaters formed no part of the school curriculum. Being a sensible man with a very just and sane conception of his duty, and a sense of humour withal, he recognised a certain measure of reasonableness in the complaint. The constant aim of the teachers is to help their pupils to live the ordinary life of hearing children of their own social class and to acquire as much general knowledge. Where this mother failed to be quite fair was in not recognising that every piece of commonplace information which the hearing child picks up almost unconsciously, and entirely with-

out effort, has to be acquired by the deaf with more or less labour and pains.

As an example of what can be done in the way of language teaching with an intelligent pupil, here is an "original story" written by a little deaf girl in a Bethnal Green school:—

"There was an old woman who lived in a small cottage, and she had two cats, one was white and one was black; the poor white cat was lost, and she looked for him in the bedroom, parlour and kitchen, but she could not find him, so she put on her hat and shawl and went out to look for him, and asked the people, 'Do you know where my white cat is?' but the people said, 'I don't know, I have never seen your cat.' Then she went to buy some cats' meat, and when she got indoors, she took off her hat and shawl and gave some to the black cat, and she put the other meat on the top shelf. She sat down on the stool at the side of the fire, and worried about her lost cat, and then she fell fast asleep against the wall, and the white cat came indoors and jumped on her lap, and she woke up, and then said, 'O my dear pussy, where have you been?' so the white cat said to her, 'I have been on the roof fighting with another bad cat,' so she stood up on the stool, and took the piece of meat off the high shelf, and gave it to her white cat, and he ate it up."

The child who wrote this was thirteen years of age, and had been quite deaf since she was eighteen months old. It would not of course be a remarkable composition for a hearing child of thirteen; but when it is remembered by what slow and laborious steps a deaf child has to learn every word and every construction in her native language, a simple exercise like this must surely be regarded as a striking illustration of successful teaching.

It is not generally, however, at the ordinary day centre that we can now see the highest development of the deaf work under the London School Board. The work is being organised similarly to that of the blind

children, so as to give the elder scholars two or three years of training, largely of a technical character, in a special residential school, with the object of fitting them for definite occupations. The school for elder boys was opened at Anerley in January 1903, that for elder girls is to be opened at Wandsworth in the spring of 1904.

In the Anerley school there are fifty-five boarders (presently to be increased to sixty) and about twenty day scholars. They have been gathered from the deaf centres in all parts of London. Here, then, one may see how far the education of deaf children under the London School Board has yet gone. It is very interesting to watch a lesson being given to the highest class, and to join in conversation with the boys. These lads, whose ages run from thirteen to sixteen, are on a level in general information, I am told, with the Fifth Standard in a hearing school.

The conversation on the occasion of my visit ranged from one subject to another, and it became evident that the boys were pretty closely in touch with most of the subjects in which hearing boys of their own age would be interested. They read the lips of the teacher with wonderful ease and accuracy, and there is very little difficulty now owing to restricted vocabulary. The visitor, especially if he be a bearded or mustachioed person, is not read so easily as the teacher, but even he finds it possible to take a fair share in the conversation. Most of the boys read the newspapers, and some are beginning to read standard books with interest. One bright lad in the class had started writing a story, the title of which at least is noteworthy. It was to be a story about Siberia, and was to be called "The Land of a Thousand Sorrows." It must not be supposed from his choice of a subject that the young author is of a preternaturally melancholy disposition. On the contrary his normal demeanour seems to be cheerful to the verge of hilarity. In reply to my inquiry as to what sort of letters and essays the boys could write, the

headmaster, Mr J. O. White, suggested that the young author, J. C., should write a letter on a subject chosen by me. I suggested "My favourite book," and there and then J. C. sat down and wrote the following characteristic effusion, which he handed to me before I left the classroom. I transcribe the letter *verbatim et literatim* :—

"DEAR SIR,—Just a few lines to let you know what I think of that excellent book *The Life of Nelson*. It is my favourite book, and I do not remember having read a better book than that. I think it is a book that should be read by young and old. There is one part, however, which puzzles me. That is :—what became of the man who shot Nelson? Quite recently I saw in a weekly periodical a column with the above question for a heading. So I read it, and now I cannot find out which statement is true and which is not. I shall be very glad for any information on the subject. And now I think I will close my letter with kind regards.—I remain, yours truly,  
J. C."

It ought to be explained that this lad became deaf after acquiring language and some degree of education; so that his attainments must not be regarded as typical of those of congenital deaf-mutes of the same age.

It is, however, the technical and trade instruction which give to the Anerley school its distinctive character. It is felt that since it is not the easiest thing in the world even for the hearing lad to get a good situation when he leaves school, the deaf lad will have a very poor chance indeed unless he have some special qualifications which will to some extent make up for his physical disability. It may not be possible in the time devoted to trade instruction in the school to make a boy a thoroughly expert workman, but he may well attain sufficient skill to make him very useful in a workshop, he may gain a grasp of the principles of his trade, become familiar with its technical terms, and so be able without difficulty to

receive instructions and explanations from the employer or foreman. A deaf boy who goes into a workshop without such preliminary training is apt to be rejected as stupid or incompetent, because no one has time or patience to explain to him the unfamiliar terms and processes. For great as are the triumphs of the oral system, it has to be recognised that its theoretical possibilities are never realised to the full; a deaf-mute hardly ever learns to talk and to apprehend spoken language with anything like the ease and accuracy of those who possess the sense of hearing.

During his first year at Anerley a boy spends as a rule three half days a week in the workshops, during his second year five, and during his third year seven half days. The trades taught are tailoring, shoemaking, woodwork and metal work, and others will be added later on. The instructors are practical mechanics, and the instruction given is on distinctly trade lines, thus differing from that given in the ordinary manual training centres. All explanations are given orally, so that the work of the shops as well as of the schoolroom ministers to the pupils' progress in speech and lip-reading.

The Anerley school is the first of the kind in England, and is therefore to a great extent experimental. The services of a very able and experienced headmaster have been secured, and the Board has evidently determined that there shall be no risk of failure through any niggardliness in the matter of equipment, for the planning and furnishing of the school are on the most lavish scale. Attendance at this particular school must, of course, be voluntary; but any reluctance parents may have to sending their sons to a boarding school generally disappears after a visit of inspection to Anerley. The residential part of the building consists of four cottage homes named after distinguished members of the London School Board—the Lawrence,

Reay, Moberly, and Stanley Homes. Each accommodates fifteen boys and is in charge of a "mother." The daily life is modelled, as far as may be, on that of a well-ordered home rather than of an institution. Five boys sleep in each of the bright, clean bedrooms, and every boy has his own comfortable spring-mattressed bed. The boys willingly help with



DINNER IN ONE OF THE COTTAGE HOMES (ANERLEY RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL).

the housework, and there is a healthy rivalry between the houses, so that the Lawrence boys cannot go to school happily with the consciousness that the Stanley door-knocker is more brilliantly polished than theirs, nor can the Stanley boys tolerate the thought that the Reay common room is more tastefully decorated than their own.

There is a fine playing field in which cricket and football are vigorously pursued, and the school hall is fitted as a gymnasium—the finest gymnasium in any

London Board School, and one which many secondary schools would be proud to possess. The school has its annual sports day, and visits are paid to a neighbouring swimming bath. The results of this ample provision for athletics and physical training are seen in the vigorous, sturdy figures and alert demeanour of most of the boys. Beyond the playing field is a large garden, which supplies the school with vegetables, and in which plots of ground for flower gardens are assigned to such of the boys as care to cultivate them.

At the school for elder girls, which is to be opened at Wandsworth Common, it is proposed to teach dressmaking on artistic lines and millinery, in the hope that some of the girls will be able to find employment, on leaving school, in good West End shops. Girls who lack the taste and artistic capacity for such work will be taught laundry work, and other occupations may be introduced later on.

Such is the scheme for the deaf child of ordinary capacity; the day centre up to the age of thirteen followed by three years at a residential school where special attention is given to technical work. But there are some unfortunate children for whom this curriculum is impossible. Their mental capacity is below par, or perhaps some other physical infirmity is added to deafness. What is to be done with such children? They get little good at the ordinary deaf schools, and their presence tends to retard the progress of the brighter children. Yet they are capable of receiving some degree of education, and the difficulty of imparting it does not relieve the educational authority of its duty to these unfortunates. Since October, 1902 special provision has been made for them at a residential school in Homerton. Here are gathered all the deaf children who, for one reason or another, are incapable of benefiting by the teaching of the ordinary deaf schools.

It is a pathetic little company of boys and girls of all ages from six to sixteen—about forty of them in all. Every child is a difficult case, but nearly every one presents a different kind of difficulty. Every child is a separate problem in pedagogics and psychology, and consequently, of course, requires individual attention. The task of the headmaster



BOYS AT WORK IN THEIR OWN GARDENS (ANERLEY RESIDENTIAL SCHOOL).

and matron, Mr and Mrs F. G. Barnes, and of the other teachers, is—one would suppose—anything but an enviable one. Fortunately Mr Barnes is endowed with a very large measure of the Mark Tapley spirit, and his cheerfulness and energy are infectious. The more depressing the conditions of work, the greater the credit for being jolly; the duller the child, the more cheering are the faint gleams of intelligence which the teachers are able to evoke. For though none of these children will make a bright scholar,



and few probably will ever earn their own living, yet much may be done to brighten and elevate their lives. Some when they first come to school are little better than animals—speechless, helpless, unmoral, the reasoning faculties dormant, the conscience unenlightened. But give them good food, a comfortable and happy home and continual occupation, and by degrees the most degraded become self-respecting, acquire nice habits, take an interest in life, show themselves anxious to please, display some mental activity and some manual skill, though but the most crude, begin to communicate with their companions and their teachers: in a word, are raised from the animal to the human level. Such is the work of this Homerton school, and here, of course, there can be no pedantic allegiance to the oral or any other system of teaching; any and every means are adopted by which the intelligence can be awakened and instruction imparted.

Let us look a little more closely at a few of Mr Barnes' "cases." Here is George, aged nine, who has been a year at an ordinary deaf school, and during that time, it is reported, has learned nothing whatever. He is beginning now to articulate a little, and shows decided progress in drawing and brushwork. Here is Mary, of about the same age, whose sad lot it has been to lie about on the doorstep and in the passage of her slum dwelling waiting for the return of a drunken mother. She has but just come to the school, and still has a frightened look and shrinking manner; she will even, if suddenly approached, raise her arm as if to shield herself from a blow. She is learning by degrees the lesson that must form the basis of whatever future teaching can be given her, that her teachers are her friends, desiring only her welfare and happiness. Alice is a big girl of about fourteen with pleasant face and good manners; evidently she has had a good home. But what is she doing in a class

of little children? She has lately come from a country village, and until she came to the Homerton school had never been to school in her life. Looking at her cheerful and not unintelligent face, one cannot help feeling how much richer and fuller her life might have been, had the educational authorities of her native place done their duty years ago. Arthur is a boy who seems quite normal in point of intelligence, but he cannot be taught at the ordinary centre, because all efforts have failed to make him speak. He reads the finger language, however, without much difficulty, and replies in the same way, or by expressive signs. A very sad case is that of Dorothy, though she is one of the happiest children in the school; she is about twelve years of age, nearly stone deaf and nearly blind,—will be quite blind, they say, in a year's time. She speaks nicely and can hear, if you shout very loudly in her ear. She is learning to read and write on the Braille system, so that if hers should be the terrible fate of total blindness and deafness, she will not be without means of communication and mental development. Henry is a boy who looks decidedly dull, and, besides being stone deaf, is partially paralysed on one side. The paralysed hand and arm have no doubt got worse through disuse, and Mr Barnes thought they might be restored to some degree of vigour by constant use. To make the boy use his weak hand it was necessary to impress upon him that he would have no dinner unless he manipulated it with both hands. He now constantly uses the weak hand, which is gradually becoming more and more serviceable.

But perhaps the school never had a more seemingly hopeless case than that of Polly, a pathetic little object of seven years of age. When Polly was first brought to the school a few months before, she was in a filthy condition and unable to walk. She had evidently been grossly neglected, having probably been strapped in a chair to keep her out of mischief or out of danger

while her parents were at work. For weeks after her arrival she never smiled, nor showed any emotion, except temper when displeased. Now she smiles continually, and to her teacher's secret gratification is beginning to show signs of mischievousness. Now that she has taken more the semblance of a human child, something will doubtless be done in the way of educating her. For such a child confinement in an idiot asylum would, sooner or later, have been the almost inevitable fate, had she not been taken in hand by the School Board.

Nowhere are the deficiencies of these poor children more clearly seen than in the playground. To deaf children of low mental type all kinds of activity are distasteful. With most of them the idea of recreation is to lounge about doing nothing. Only when a teacher comes out to organise a game do they really play. Physical drill and organised play are of great importance in the training of these children, because, apart from the physical benefit, they have a brightening effect on the intelligence; bodily activity induces mental activity.

Some admirable work on behalf of the deaf is being done in the Evening Continuation Schools. Under the direction of Mr J. W. Fisher, one of the Board's teachers of the deaf, a system of evening classes has been carefully organised with a view to enabling deaf pupils at all the Board centres to continue their education after leaving the day school—a matter of the utmost importance to the deaf, who would otherwise lose much of the benefit of the training they have already received. It is satisfactory to know that a very large proportion of the deaf lads and girls who have passed through the day schools gladly avail themselves of these opportunities. Woodwork of a more advanced character than in the day schools, metal work, wood-carving and gymnastics are the favourite classes with the male students, and cooking, laundry work and dressmaking

are the subjects most in demand amongst the girls. Special language classes are held, but all the teaching tends incidentally to develop the powers of expression and lip-reading.

At the evening schools we find a higher level of speaking and lip-reading ability than we have seen in any of the day schools. There are many degrees of ability amongst the students, but intelligent young men and women who have been taught on the oral system from early childhood can converse with remarkable ease and fluency. With them speech has become the customary method of communication. They rarely resort to signs either when conversing amongst themselves or with their hearing neighbours, but carry on all the business of life—their daily work in factory and workshop, their shopping, their intercourse with friends at home, even their love-making—by the ordinary means of speech.

In the case of some of these classes it may be doubted whether their educational value, great though this may be, is not eclipsed by their social and moral value. From this point of view it would be difficult to estimate too highly the service rendered by such a school as that at Summerfield Street, Bethnal Green, where the group of girls—mostly factory hands—who come together for dressmaking, cooking and language study, are like a happy little family party, united to each other and to their teachers by the strongest bonds of affection and sympathy.

The deaf work in London has suffered somewhat in the past from want of uniformity and continuity of organisation. It will be seen from what has been said in this chapter that the present thorough organisation, which is very largely the outcome of the efforts of Mr B. P. Jones, the Board's Superintendent of Deaf and Blind Schools, has only just been completed. It must therefore be three or four years hence before it will be possible to speak from full experience of the efficacy of

the present system. When a fair number of boys at Anerley and girls at Wandsworth have completed their three years of training, and taken their place in the industrial world; when the ordinary day centres, relieved from the specially difficult cases, have had a chance to do their best with the intelligent children from six to thirteen years of age; and when the poor weaklings have been subjected for several years to the gracious and stimulating influences of the Homerton Home, the successors of the London School Board will be able to estimate rightly the value of the work done by the Board on behalf of the deaf children of London.

## CHAPTER XVIII

### SCHOOLS FOR THE MENTALLY AND PHYSICALLY DEFECTIVE

IT was not until long after the School Board had adopted the principle of special schools for the blind and deaf that the need was recognised of special provision being made for other classes of afflicted children. Amongst half a million children there must inevitably be a considerable number, besides the blind and the deaf, who suffer from mental or physical infirmities which unfit them from profiting to the full by the instruction given in the ordinary schools. As a matter of fact the Education Department has estimated, and the School Board has accepted the correctness of the estimate, that one per cent of children of the elementary school class between the ages of seven and fourteen are mentally defective and require special teaching.

Previous to 1892 these children, who are to be distinguished on the one hand from the merely dull and backward, and on the other from the imbecile, either attended the ordinary day-schools or remained at home in helpless idleness. In the former case they received little benefit themselves, and were inevitably a hindrance to their brighter schoolfellows and a nuisance to their teachers; in the latter case they themselves suffered the grievous wrong of being deprived of opportunities to develop such faculties as they possessed, and must have undergone a further deterioration—mental, moral and physical—ending, it might be, in an idiot asylum.

In 1892 the Board decided to open two special schools for mentally and physically defective children, and the number has since been greatly increased, until there were, in March 1903, 61 centres for mentally defective and 8 for physically defective children, with many more in course of construction or projected. There are about 3200 mentally defective children attending these schools, and provision is to be made for about 2000 more. Mrs Burgwin, a lady who had previously done good service as head teacher of one of the Board's most difficult schools, has been organising superintendent of this special work from the beginning, and under her supervision a very extensive and efficient organisation has been built up, which, if it does not yet meet the educational needs of every afflicted child in London, goes a very long way in that direction.

The schools for defective children seldom have more than 60 or 80 on the roll, and the classes are limited to 20 scholars. The largest school for the mentally defective is at Shillington Street, Battersea, where there are about 120 children, and here, perhaps, better than at a smaller centre, we can examine the system of instruction in detail, and see many types of the defective child.

It is a sad and pathetic sight—this congregation of dullards; I know no sadder in the whole range of School Board work. Every child has been certified as defective by the Board's medical officer; but indeed most of them carry their deficiency so clearly expressed in their features and their demeanour that it needs no expert to discover it. Most of the children are almost as poor specimens physically as mentally; hardly a child in the school is really robust. These children mark the last stage in the gradual degeneration of a once vigorous stock. Here is a glimpse of the tragedy of London life. The school is a grim object-lesson in the effects of horrible material conditions of life intensified by vicious habits. And we are not surprised when

Mrs Clark, the able and devoted head mistress, who knows the home conditions of most of her young charges, tells us that one child's father is in a criminal lunatic asylum; that the father of another is in prison; that the mother of a third is an habitual drunkard, and that nearly all come from the poorest of homes.

Many are the problems which a school for the mentally defective suggests to the social reformer. To the teacher the main problem is how to develop such dim faculties as the children have, to brighten their lives and to fit them to earn their own living in part if not entirely. The work has to be largely individual, for each child is a separate study. Some, though very dull at mental work, are fairly clever with their fingers. I saw at Shillington Street some drawings which would have been quite creditable for a normal child, and Mrs Clark, who carefully fosters every germ of intelligence and capacity in her young charges, is quite pleased to sit on a chair caned by one of the boys and to wear at times a blouse made by some of the girls. Others are altogether slovenly and inaccurate in their handwork, and can hardly be taught to rule a straight line. Some few seem to be fairly receptive but to lack the power of expression. And this is a weakness which is, to a greater or less degree, common to the majority of children in these schools. Many when they first come to school cannot speak intelligibly. They have to be taught to speak, and "articulation" forms a subject of instruction in every class. A child will sometimes learn to recite distinctly, and even to answer questions in class fairly well, but will lapse into incoherence when out of school. As a rule imitative work—writing, drawing, etc.—is found much easier than that which involves reasoning. Arithmetic, for instance, presents immense difficulties. In the syllabus of work for the lowest class the arithmetic prescribed is "numbers up to 5;" for the next class it is "numbers up to 8." A year is commonly spent in each class, so that for these



children it is a year's journey from the intellectual level represented by ability to add 5 to 4 to that at which  $8+6$  becomes a problem possible of solution.

The teachers in these schools must be endowed with almost miraculous patience. One might suppose the dulness of the scholars and the slowness of the progress would have a depressing effect upon the teachers. But the work has its compensations, and some of the teachers get quite fond of it. They watch eagerly for the signs of growing intelligence, and rejoice in every forward step, as a nurse might rejoice in the improving health of her patients. The poor weak brains, of course, must not be overtaxed. Every lesson is very short, and the purely mental occupations are varied by a considerable number of handwork subjects, which, while developing manual skill, also stimulate the intelligence. The children unquestionably brighten in manner while at school, and if absent for a considerable time they fall back into their old dull, listless, inert ways. All the teachers in these schools are women, but there is no difficulty about discipline; both boys and girls are, as a rule, docile and eager to please. Physical exercises are practised daily, and are extremely valuable in these schools, not merely because the physical condition of the children is so poor, but because bodily activity tends to stimulate mental activity.

And to what purpose, it may be asked, is all this elaborate and costly work on behalf of the feeble and degenerate? There must be some in the special schools whom no amount of patient effort will ever lead beyond the merest rudiments of learning, and who probably will never be fit to earn their own living. Is not the time and money spent on such hopeless cases entirely wasted? By no means. Even their dull intelligence is in some degree sharpened by their life at school, a little brightness and interest are added to their lives, they become more self-respecting, and acquire

habits of cleanliness and order. And this is no small boon to the children themselves, to their friends and to the community, for without such training many must have degenerated still further, becoming a nuisance and a burden to themselves and to their families.

But there are other pupils of whom much better things can be recorded. Under the gently stimulating influence of the special school the defective child approximates more and more closely to the normal, until after a few years he is able to return to the ordinary school, to share successfully in the work of normal scholars and obtain a good situation when he leaves school. Others for whom this is not possible may, after passing through the special school, obtain some employment of a not very exacting nature by which they will be able to earn a modest livelihood. Mrs Clark told me of one and another of her old pupils who were earning their own living respectably and happily. They were but hewers of wood and drawers of water, yet she spoke of them with the same pride and delight with which a teacher in an ordinary school might speak of scholarships and university degrees—and who shall say with less reason? It is in the light of these results that one understands the patience, devotion and even enthusiasm of some of the teachers in what to so many would be a most irksome and depressing task.

Until a few years ago the physically and mentally defective children were grouped together. This was a bad arrangement for the little cripples, many of whom were of at least average intelligence. A few of the more robust cripples were educated at the ordinary schools. A few others attended the schools for the mentally defective, where they could rarely obtain any instruction beyond the second standard; but the majority stayed at home and grew up in ignorance, or with such little teaching as their parents were able to give. It is largely due to the efforts of Mrs Humphry Ward that the period of neglect for London's crippled

children came to an end. In the autumn of 1898 Mrs Humphry Ward, having gathered together a number of crippled children living in the West Central district of London, offered to the School Board the rooms of the Passmore Edwards Institute in Tavistock Place if the Board would provide teachers and be responsible for the cost of the school. To this the Board agreed, and



CRIPPLED CHILDREN GOING TO SCHOOL BY AMBULANCE.

thus the first Board School for crippled children came into being. The work proved so successful, and was so much appreciated by parents and children, that the Board soon decided to extend it until all the crippled children in London should be gathered into schools specially adapted to meet their needs. The report for 1903 shows that there were at Lady Day eight centres for crippled children with several others in course of construction. The numbers on the roll were 422, but

as there are more than 1500 crippled children in London of the elementary school class, it will be seen that the work of providing for them is as yet far from complete.

The difficulty of getting the little cripples safely to and from school is met in a very interesting way. Every morning at about half-past eight an ambulance drawn by a horse of sturdy build and even temper sets out from the school in charge of a trained nurse. It traverses the neighbouring streets, picking up here and there a little group of scholars at the corner of a street, or more often at the home of a kindly mother who is not willing that her own or other people's crippled children should wait about the streets. Those children who cannot walk at all are fetched right from their own doors and carefully lifted into the ambulance. The larger centres have two ambulances and each makes two or more journeys. By about ten o'clock all the children are safely in school. The nurse remains at school all day, superintends the preparation of dinner, and takes the children home in the afternoon. She will also, if necessary, adjust bandages and attend to slight ailments, but the work being strictly educational, very bad cases and those requiring medical or surgical treatment during the day are not admitted.

The school at Tavistock Place is interesting as being the pioneer institution of the kind, and also by reason of the surroundings, which are in many ways different from those of the ordinary Board School. The children here have the great advantage of being able to play in the fine old garden belonging to the Duke of Bedford, which adjoins the grounds of the Settlement, and which the Duke places at the disposal of the children during their recreation time. But it is to one of the newer schools that one should go in order to see the normal type of London School Board cripple school. The largest centre is at Tennyson Street, Battersea, where the accommodation is for eighty children. But

this is now considered a little too large, as the children have to be collected from an inconveniently wide area. A central hall, which serves as a dining-room, with bright, light classrooms leading from it, is the plan of building generally adopted. The equipment is very complete, the comfort of the children being considered in every possible way. Comfortable cane-seated chairs



PLAYTIME AT TAVISTOCK PLACE SCHOOL FOR PHYSICALLY DEFECTIVE CHILDREN  
(IN THE DUKE OF BEDFORD'S GARDEN).

with table flaps and leg rests are provided in three different sizes; there are wheeled chairs by means of which children who cannot walk can move from room to room with the greatest ease, and adjustable couches for those who have to maintain a recumbent position, and for others who may need occasionally to lie down and rest.

It is a pathetic little company that gathers in a cripple school. Many kinds of deformity are repre-

sented ; there are many cases of paralysis, and the few children who appear quite well suffer from very weak hearts. But, indeed, when one sees the children in school, their infirmities are by no means obtrusive, and at times one might suppose that teachers and scholars alike have forgotten all about them. For the most part the children look remarkably happy, and enter with zest into the varied occupations of the day. It is the same here as we have already noted in the case of the blind and the deaf. School seems to be the bright spot in the lives of these afflicted children. And no doubt to many that will seem the supreme merit of these schools. But of course they do a genuine educational work. The main object is education ; the happiness is incidental.

Another incidental, but very important, benefit is the improvement in bodily health that often results from attendance at the cripple school. Although the school attempts no hospital work, it often proves the best possible sanatorium. The good wholesome mid-day meal, the pleasant occupation, the companionship, the new interests and ambitions all tell beneficially upon the physical health. And especially valuable in this direction is the exercise obtained at school. The children are taught to exert themselves and use to the utmost the bodily powers they possess, with the natural result that these powers are developed. Children who have been brought to the cripple school unable to walk a step have found that after a few months they could walk about the schoolrooms and playground without assistance, and hands and arms that seemed almost helpless with paralysis have been trained to a considerable measure of usefulness. The school lessons only last for about three hours daily, instead of five and a half as in the ordinary schools, for care must be taken not to overtax the feeble frames ; the children for the most part are bright enough, but they very soon get tired.

Handwork of a light character plays an important part in the school curriculum, for it is upon their deftness of hand and finger that for most of these children the chance of earning their own living will depend. Chair-caning, the making of scrap and wool rugs and geometrical cardboard models, basket-weaving, and (for the girls) needlework—including embroidery and lace-making—are the chief occupations at Tennyson Street. At Tavistock Place, besides several of these occupations, bent iron work and macrame work are taught. At another school I found that both boys and girls were learning to knit, and the teacher was proposing to introduce dressmaking for some of the elder girls. The curriculum is not quite the same at all schools, but everywhere the aim of training the hand and eye and developing the artistic perceptions is kept well in view. Some of the little weak fingers get wonderfully clever. I was shown at Tennyson Street a piece of delicate and beautiful lace made by a little girl whose hands were almost paralysed. At drawing, brushwork and clay modelling some of the young cripples do exceedingly well, their work comparing favourably with the best work done in the ordinary schools. The best teaching in these subjects that the Board can supply is at the service of the cripple schools, instruction being given to the more advanced pupils by the Board's special art teachers.

An important incident in the day's proceedings is the mid-day dinner, the arrangements for which are under the control of a voluntary committee. A kitchen is attached to each centre, and the Board supplies all needful utensils, but incurs no expense for food. The children pay twopence each, except in a few cases of extreme poverty, when a penny or even less is paid. But, small as the payments are, they suffice to cover the cost of a good nourishing dinner of meat and vegetables followed by pudding. Most of the children sit up to the dining-tables, but the few who cannot do so are

supplied quite comfortably with the help of the table adjustments to their chairs and couches. Looking in at one of the cripple schools while the cheerful dinner party is in progress one might often see the children being waited on by ladies who have come to the school for this special purpose. Often the Hon. Maude Lawrence, the Chairman of the Special Schools Com-



BASKET-WEAVING AT TENNYSON STREET SCHOOL FOR PHYSICALLY DEFECTIVE CHILDREN.

mittee, shares in this kindly service, and after dinner the ladies will chat with the children or join them in a game, thus bringing into their lives a little refining and brightening influence from the outside world. The gentle, winning ways of many of the crippled children and the pathetic infirmities of all appeal strongly to the pity and sympathy of all who come in contact with them, and they have many friends.

The Technical Education Board of the London County Council has conferred a boon on some of the



brightest children in the cripple schools, as well as in the blind and deaf schools, by awarding scholarships, which enable the children, on leaving school at the age of sixteen, to undergo two or three years' training at a technical institute or school of art, and thus fit themselves to take a good position in one of the artistic crafts. But the case of the average child presents great difficulty. It is none too easy for the healthy lad to find suitable employment on leaving school, and the case of the deaf, the blind and the crippled who have to earn their own living is often a very hard one.

The strict duty of the education authority ends, of course, when the child in the special school reaches the age of sixteen. But after spending so much money and effort on providing the deaf, the blind and the crippled with the skill and knowledge which would enable them to earn their own living, common sense and common humanity would seem to suggest that an opportunity should be provided for them to apply their skill and knowledge. The Board has fully recognised the importance of this matter which lies just beyond the range of its legal responsibility. An After Care Committee, consisting of members of the Board and others interested in the work, has been formed, with the Hon. Maude Lawrence as Chairman, to act as a connecting link between the Board and various charitable societies, representatives of which sit on the Committee. An effort is made by the Committee and the societies associated with it to find places for the boys and girls who leave the special schools, and to keep a friendly eye upon them during the first years of their industrial life. Much has been done by this means, but much remains to be done. A scheme has been mooted for the establishment by the London County Council of workshops for the blind, and if this should come to fruition an important step will have been taken towards enabling the blind to earn their own living by honourable work. But the

need of the deaf and the crippled is hardly less. Employers who can obtain able-bodied workmen naturally hesitate to employ the weak and afflicted. Municipal workshops, which might well be made self-supporting, offer probably the best solution of the difficulty.

There remains one other class for whom the London School Board, with all its elaborate arrangements for the care of afflicted children, has not yet catered, namely, the epileptics. Children who suffer only from slight and occasional fits may find a place in the special schools, or even in the ordinary schools, but those who suffer from the malady in a more severe form have to be excluded from the schools in the interests of the other children. For these children nothing has yet been done. The Education Act (Defective and Epileptic) of 1899 gives the Board power to establish residential schools for epileptics, and the Board has been anxious to avail itself of this power as soon as it can obtain an alteration of the provision which limits the size of the schools to fifteen children. Such limitation, it is thought, not only involves very heavy expense, but makes the proper classification of the children almost impossible.

When this matter has been satisfactorily adjusted it will round up and complete the system developed by the School Board for the education of London's defective children. Perhaps there is something in the sight of an afflicted child which calls out the noblest qualities of men and women. Certainly the School Board has no abler or more devoted servants than those who, in the organisation and working of the special schools, are helping the blind, the deaf, the feeble-minded and the crippled to share the educational advantages of the healthy and strong. It will be seen, from what has been said, that much still remains for the new authority to accomplish, but it will start with the advantage of a thorough and well-organised system, an ample equipment and an able and devoted staff.

## CHAPTER XIX

### THE BOARD SCHOOL AS A SOCIAL FORCE

THE London Board Schools stand for much more than education, and if we confined our attention to the educational work carried on in them we should ignore some of their most interesting and most beneficent activities. A child is a bundle of problems, and the most successful teacher is he who solves the greatest number of these problems. Nor can the teacher ignore those problems which lie outside the realm of pedagogy. No teacher, least of all a Board School teacher, can afford to say, "My business is to teach according to a certain syllabus and I have nothing to do with my pupils' food and clothes, their homes and their parents, their play and their holidays." To adopt such an attitude would be to fling away opportunities, to refuse the moral leadership that is the teacher's highest function, to choose the menial rather than the kingly office.

Readers who have followed thus far our inquiries into School Board work will have seen that many of the most difficult problems of the work arise out of the poverty of large numbers of the scholars. The child who has come to school without any breakfast, and who is habitually underfed, appears dull and listless. When the eyes of his schoolfellows sparkle with delight at some thrilling story from history or some interesting chemical experiment, he is listlessly gazing into vacancy ; he seems hardly able to grasp and retain a single item of fresh information ; the starved brain simply cannot

do its work. The boy who has been at work since five o'clock in the morning delivering milk or selling newspapers is often late at school in the morning and sleepy in the afternoon. Sometimes, before afternoon school is over, the overtaxed machine has quite run down, and he has fallen asleep at his desk, and the teacher, knowing that he will be at work again in the evening, mercifully lets him sleep on. Poverty is a direct cause, too, of much irregularity and unpunctuality in attendance. "No boots" is a common excuse for absence from school, and the need of mothers to go out to work, leaving the children to look after themselves, often accounts for children coming to school dirty or late, or staying away altogether.

There is no better way of learning something of the nature and variety of the problems and difficulties that confront the Board School teacher than by spending an hour or two in one of the poorest schools. Let us take, by way of example, a school situated in one of the poorest parts of Lambeth—Johanna Street by name. Some of the cases which come under the teachers' notice here throw a vivid light on the conditions of child life among the London poor. The headmaster, Mr H. C. Wilkins, points out a boy who had absented himself from school and home for a whole week. It was afterwards found that he and another lad had been sleeping in a disused cistern on some demolished property in the neighbourhood, whence they sallied forth in the early morning to Covent Garden Market, stole a few cauliflowers, sold these during the day and bought food with the proceeds, returning at night to their queer and comfortless resting-place. This programme was repeated day after day, until the long arm of the law, in the person of a policeman, reached them and their adventurous career was stopped. Another boy pointed out is one of two brothers whose mother has deserted them, and whose father is undergoing a week's imprisonment in lieu of the fine he could not pay for keeping

the youngest boy from school. The boys are absolutely without means of support, and apparently dependent for their food upon the kindness of a neighbour, herself extremely poor.

At this school a register is kept of all children helped with free meals or otherwise, and the particulars given are melancholy reading. Here are three entries chosen almost at random:—

(a) "Father 46 weeks in hospital with stone in kidney; mother, dropsy in leg; grandmother helps and landlady is kind."

(b) "Mother, widow, takes round oil to sell to cabmen; rent, five shillings; three in family; bread and butter for dinner; boy sells cough tablets on Saturday."

(c) "Father out of work; mother, blind; five in one room; meals generally bread or bread and butter."

These are only a few cases which are typical of hundreds to be found in all the poorer districts of London. It is obvious that such children are heavily handicapped in the educational race as compared with the well-fed and well-cared-for children of happier homes. And the mere professional desire, which every good teacher has, that his class or his school shall compare favourably with others might impel him to do something to ameliorate the hard conditions of the children's lives. And perhaps it is partly for that reason that teachers have been so energetic in promoting and assisting social and philanthropic efforts in connection with their schools—efforts so varied and arduous that, as Mr Wilkins, the headmaster at Johanna Street, remarked, "I might be busy here all day without doing any educational work at all." But the strongest appeal has been that which silent suffering and want—especially in children—must always make to humane men and women.

"It made my heart ache," said Mr Wilkins, "when I first came here and saw the white, pinched faces of the

boys. I wanted to put a beef-steak into each of them before I began teaching them." And so he set to work to establish a fund which provides, not beef-steaks, but good nourishing soup throughout the winter months for the poorest scholars in his own and two neighbouring schools. Tickets for the dinners are not given without strict investigation, every effort being made to prevent parents who can feed their children being relieved of the responsibility for doing so. Only in cases where the children without such help would be suffering from absolute hunger are the tickets given. Yet at Johanna Street, during the winter, about 50 per cent of the children have to be provided with dinners. When I visited the school in May the winter dinners had ceased, the experience being that the pinch of poverty is not so keenly felt in the summer months. Yet when Mr Wilkins asked a class of about 50 boys if any of them had come to school that day without any dinner, nine held up their hands; and if we eliminate one fastidious young gentleman who could not eat boiled rice, there remained eight, or sixteen per cent of the class, for whom that day no mid-day meal had been provided. In answer to a further question more than half the class indicated that they had got their feet wet coming to school (it was a very wet day), and a glance at the boots showed that there was no exaggeration here.

In all parts of London during the winter months the beneficent work of feeding the hungry children goes on. The teachers are always active and willing helpers in the work, which is, of course, purely voluntary, and very often they are the prime movers and organisers. The meals given may be breakfasts or dinners, or both. The *menu* varies a good deal in different places; breakfast generally consists of bread and butter or bread and jam (London children won't eat porridge) with tea, coffee, cocoa or milk. Dinner may consist of roast meat and vegetables, varied by stews and meat puddings, or it may be a simple repast of buns or bread and jam with

cocoa; but the meal most widely favoured is a good nourishing soup with bread. The cost varies from  $\frac{1}{2}$ d. to 3d. a meal; probably 1d. very approximately represents the average cost of all the meals—breakfasts and dinners—given to Board School children. Such a result is the most striking testimony that could be given to the economical and careful administration of the various funds; it is, of course, only possible because practically the whole of the work is done by voluntary helpers.

Sometimes the meals are provided on the school premises, sometimes on church or mission premises lent for the purpose. The greater number of the meals given are free, the tickets being distributed by the teachers after careful inquiry into the circumstances of each applicant, but in a considerable minority of cases the children pay part or the whole of the cost.

A specially interesting and well-organised system of food supply is that of the East Lambeth Teachers' Association, which in the winter of 1902-03 provided nearly 93,000 dinners for the needy children of 38 South London schools. The Fund, which has been in existence since 1892, originated in this wise: Mr W. H. Libby, the headmaster of the Board School at Victory Place, Walworth, noticing two brothers in his school who seemed very weak and languid, asked if they were hungry. "Yes, sir," was the answer, "we have had nothing to eat for two days." To test the truth of this statement Mr Libby sent out for a pennyworth of the stalest bread that could be obtained; this he gave to the boys, and they devoured it ravenously. Believing this to be no isolated case, though perhaps a specially bad one, Mr Libby enlisted the sympathy and help of his fellow-teachers, and the Scholars' Free Meal Fund was started.

Very substantial help was obtained from a gentleman whose ambition it was to convert the world to vegetarianism, and in deference to his views the

Association still works on strictly vegetarian lines. The dinners consist of soup or pudding, and the preparation and distribution are carried out in a quite unique manner. The crypt of St Peter's Church, Walworth, has been equipped as a food supply depôt, and is under the management of the Rev. Canon Horsley, M.A., and an energetic band of voluntary workers. Here the food for all the participating schools is cooked overnight, and placed in specially made asbestos-lined vessels, in which it will keep hot for twenty-four hours. In the morning the cans containing the hot soup or pudding, as the case may be, are despatched by vans to reach the different centres in time for dinner. If required, the Association can supply 5000 meals a day at an inclusive cost of a penny per meal.

One admirable feature about the Lambeth system, which might with advantage be widely extended, is that meals are provided not only for destitute children but for those who are able and willing to pay the cost of the meal. Thousands of Board School children are unable to get a comfortable and nourishing meal at home because their mothers are obliged to go out to work. Such children are sent to school with a make-shift dinner, consisting probably of slices of bread and butter, or with a few pence, which they expend not more wisely than might be expected. In winter time a hot dinner obtainable at school for a penny or twopence would be a real boon to many such, and not the least advantage of the extension of this system would be that no stigma of pauperism would attach to the eating of a school dinner. At the Lambeth schools the diners do not know who of their number have paid the full price, who part of the cost, and who have come in with free tickets.

Although the School Board may not spend the rate-payers' money on feeding the children, it has always encouraged the efforts of voluntary workers in this direction. At one time the general feeling seemed to



be that school meals ought to be given on a self-supporting basis. In 1885 the Board passed a resolution authorising the use of schoolrooms for such meals, and two years later it resolved that certain new schools should be built with covered playgrounds specially adapted "so that they may be utilised, if necessary, for the provision of penny dinners." But the work developed more in the direction of free than of paid dinners. An investigation made by a special Committee of the Board in 1895 showed that during one week of February in that year the number of meals supplied to Board School children, admission to which was through the agency of the teachers—that is to say, excluding any meals that might be supplied by agencies acting independently of the schools—was 122,605. These meals were received by 51,897 separate children, or a little more than 10 per cent. of the children then on the rolls of the Board Schools. Of the whole number only 656 meals were paid for at a penny or more, about 90 per cent. being quite free. The Committee came to the conclusion that the need for the provision of meals to underfed children was being pretty well met by local effort, but that in some respects the organisation might be improved to prevent overlapping and the waste of charitable funds.

A society which has been of great assistance in co-ordinating various local efforts and improving organisation, as well as in providing them with funds, is the London Schools' Dinner Association. This Association was founded in 1889 to work with existing organisations and so secure more efficient and economical administration of the funds. Before making a grant to a local committee the Association requires full particulars of the number of meals likely to be required, the amount of local subscriptions and the methods of administration proposed to be adopted; it makes grants for a fortnight only, but these can be renewed if the need continues and a full return is sent showing how

the money has been expended. The Association, of which Mr J. R. Diggle is chairman, assists denominational as well as Board Schools, and its grants, which in the great majority of cases are supplemented by sums collected locally, amounted in 1903 to £2184. There are also several other societies which collect and administer funds for feeding hungry children.

Within the last few years a Joint Committee consisting of School Board members and representatives of voluntary schools and of the various dinner funds has been formed with a view to introducing further efficiency and uniformity into the administration of the funds. The Committee has sought to secure the establishment in every school where dinners are given of a Sub-Committee of a particular type, which should manage the work on uniform lines and furnish statistics to the central office. It is probable that the Committee has done a certain amount of good in checking careless or indiscriminate administration of relief, but having no money to spend it does not appear to have become a very important factor in the work, and its efforts have sometimes met with the chilling reception not infrequently accorded to those who seek to organise the charity of others. Some of the local workers have argued that as they pay the piper they ought to call the tune, and have been unwilling to modify methods of administration which they consider have worked quite well. But with or without the aid of the Joint Committee the work of feeding the hungry children is on the whole being very well done, and subscribers to the various funds need have little fear that their benefactions will be wastefully or unwisely administered.

Hardly less necessary than the provision of food is the provision of clothes for some of the children. There are some pitiable little objects to be seen in some of the Board Schools, though often the poorest parents make a most gallant effort to send their children to school looking neat and respectable. But even

where rags and tatters do not arrest the eye and appeal for pity and help, the need may be really very great. A pinafore may hide sad deficiencies, or a neat appearance may be obtained only by wearing midsummer garments in the depth of winter. Especially in the matter of boots a little help is often sadly needed, and when given goes a long way not only towards increasing the health and comfort of the children, but towards the improving of school attendance. Children will come to school with boots that offer no protection against wet weather, but there comes a day when the boots positively fall off the feet, and then the children stay at home. For to come to school barefoot may be recommended by teachers as no great hardship in summer weather, but public opinion among parents and children regards it as a degradation to which even a police-court summons is to be preferred.

In this matter the Barefoot Mission of the Ragged School Union has been a good friend to the Board Schools, and in many schools teachers are indefatigable in obtaining through private channels gifts of clothes and boots for the most needy of the children. One charitable lady keeps a whole school in boots in return for a penny a week from each child. In other schools there are boot clubs on a self-supporting basis, and savings banks for general purposes are carried on in very many schools.

One of the pleasantest features of these charitable efforts is the large share which the children themselves take in them. Many of the free dinner funds obtain a considerable proportion of their contributions from the more comfortably circumstanced children. In many schools where there is no need for free dinners collections are made on behalf of the poorer schools. At one school, Old Castle Street, Whitechapel, I found a well-organised benevolent fund entirely supported by the children themselves. Weekly collections are taken, and the money not only supplies dinners for the

poorest children in the school but goes to the relief of any special distress. Cases of illness or other exceptional need in the families of their schoolfellows are brought to the notice of the teachers by the children themselves, who thus not only help their friends, but themselves receive valuable training in practical benevolence.

Akin to the case of the under-fed and the ill-clad is that of the overworked. Thousands of school children begin to work for wages long before they leave school, the girls in domestic work, the boys running errands, helping in barbers' shops, delivering milk, selling newspapers, etc. And where the work is light and the hours are not long there is probably no harm done, and the few shillings earned may add appreciably to the comfort of the family, including the youngster himself. But unfortunately in a great many cases the need or cupidity of parents and the callousness of employers involves the children in work far beyond their strength, entirely depriving them of recreation and even cutting short the hours of sleep.

An investigation made by the School Board in 1899 into the conditions of employment out of school hours of the children in 112 schools showed that more than 1000 children worked 30 or more hours a week, while there were actually some who worked more than 60 hours a week. Many of these children would be "half-timers" at school, but even so the double strain of lessons and work must have been terribly severe. Unfortunately, in dealing with this child slavery, the teachers and the School Board have hitherto been almost powerless. Their successors will be in a stronger position for combating the evil. The Employment of Children Act, which came into operation on the 1st January 1904, forbids the employment of any child under 14 between 9 p.m. and 6 a.m., and the employment of any child under 11 in street trading at any hour; it also empowers the County Councils to

prohibit particular employments likely to be injurious to children and generally to regulate the hours and conditions of their labour. By a drastic use of its new powers the London County Council may do much to lighten the unjust burden which rests on so many London children, and incidentally to increase the efficiency of its schools.



A "HAPPY EVENING" AT STANHOPE STREET SCHOOL: PLAYING "STATUES" ON THE ROOF PLAYGROUND.

There is also another side, and a very interesting one, to what one may call the extra-scholastic work of the Board School. Apart from the relief of absolute poverty, the Board School stands for a great deal of brightness, refinement and real enjoyment for the children. During the autumn and winter months many of the schools become periodically the homes of mirth and revelry. Once a week or once a fortnight the children return to school in the evening armed with

tickets which have been distributed by their teachers, and which entitle them to participate in what is in fact as well as in name a "Happy Evening." The object now is enjoyment pure and simple; the children are bent on play, and the teachers and other ladies and gentlemen who act as leaders of the revels, have come to help them play pleasantly and wisely. There is no restraint, except such as courtesy and good taste demand, and no lessons are learned except the invaluable ones of unselfishness, good temper and fair play, which are acquired insensibly as the evening's entertainment proceeds.

This delightful work is carried on by the Children's Happy Evenings Association, an association of ladies and gentlemen whose object it is to brighten the lives of Board School children by providing recreative evenings for them in the School Board buildings. The Board, always willing to facilitate any efforts making for the welfare and happiness of its children, grants the use of the buildings without charge to the Association beyond the remuneration of the caretakers, and the Association now has 113 branches, meeting in 83 schools and providing amusement periodically for more than 16,000 children.

The movement has succeeded to a very great extent in enlisting the sympathy and practical help of members of the aristocracy. The Princess of Wales is the President of the Association and takes a lively and practical interest in its welfare. The Countess of Jersey, who is President of the Council, is a very active worker, and among the 800 voluntary helpers are many ladies who are familiar figures in West-End drawing-rooms. This coming together in sympathetic association of rich and poor must be numbered among the incidental advantages of the movement. One can well believe that some prejudices regarding the working classes have been dispelled in the minds of some who week after week have come amongst Board School

children in a spirit not of patronage but of sympathetic helpfulness; on the other hand it may well be that the memory of kindly words and gracious deeds on the part of wealthy or titled helpers at "Happy Evenings" will have some little effect in restraining bitterness and uncharitableness in the Socialistic and Labour propaganda of the future.

The programme of a "Happy Evening" generally takes the form of a judicious combination of romping games in the school hall with quieter occupations in the class-rooms. Naturally the details vary according to the number, tastes and resourcefulness of the helpers, but a visit to any one branch will give us a fair idea at least of the spirit and method of all. Let us take, by way of example, a school in the neighbourhood of Euston—Stanhope Street Board School. It is about half-past six on a Tuesday evening as we turn in at the playground gate. The sound of childish laughter guides us to the scene of the revels, which is the Girls' Department, on the first floor. As we enter the central hall a merry scene is before us. A group of little girls, holding long ribbons in their hands, are learning a new dance under the guidance of one of the lady helpers, who is herself the most sprightly dancer of the group; another lady is at the piano, making music for the dancers. It is a pretty, simple dance, and the children quickly pick up both the movement and the tune, and sing as they go. In another part of the hall a number of girls are busily skipping, a lady helper turning the rope; other children stand or sit about the room, content, apparently, to watch their companions.

Under the guidance of the Honorary Secretary of the Branch, Miss Ada Heather-Bigg, we make a tour of the classrooms. Miss Heather-Bigg is the apostle of Happy Evenings; she worked hard fourteen years ago to establish the movement and is one of the devoted band of Branch Secretaries upon whom falls the chief burden of sustaining the work. This happens to be the evening

when the President of the Branch, the Countess of Iddesleigh, is paying a visit of inspection, and we find the Countess in one of the class-rooms with a little band of children and two great hampers of flowers, which she has had sent to the school and is now engaged with her little helpers making up into bunches for distribution presently.

Another class-room is occupied by a silent and absorbed little party (we must only peep at them through the glass), who are listening to a fairy tale; a popular feature this, whether with boys or girls. The next is a room beloved of the younger girls—the “doll room”; a great assortment of dolls is here, all with clothes that can be taken off and put on again, and many times during the evening the dolls have to submit to these processes. Many friends dress and present dolls to the Association, and these are exhibited every year and make a brave show; but still more are wanted. The “doll room” is also supplied with a doll’s house and a few other toys. Another fascinating occupation going on in this room is the making of paper toys; sheets containing the parts of the toy drawn in outline are supplied to the children; these they colour with crayons, and then cut out and fold to the shape of the house, horse and cart, or whatever the toy may be, and take the completed article home as evidence of their prowess. The Association does not spend money on expensive toys; where these are found they are legacies from richer nurseries. The Princess of Wales frequently sends her children’s toys, and great is the competition among the children to play with the toys the young princes have used; even parents share the excitement and come up to the schools to see these toys.

There remain two other class-rooms to visit. One is occupied by children playing draughts, lotto, dominoes and similar games, or threading beads to make necklaces, mats, etc. The other is the painting-room, where



a number of children are always happily engaged colouring outline pictures.

Returning to the hall we find the scene has changed a little. A jumping competition is in progress, Lady Iddesleigh directing, for the girls take as readily as the boys to athletic pursuits. Then some of the children show us some singing games. "There came three



A "HAPPY EVENING" AT STANHOPE STREET SCHOOL: "ORANGES AND LEMONS."

dukes a-riding," "Our shoes are made of leather," and many others—games once traditional amongst English children, but which have been forgotten in the dull, grey life of modern cities. When taught at the "Happy Evenings," however, they are played with as much gusto as of yore. It is now getting near bed-time for the little ones, and at a word from Miss Heather-Bigg the children form in lines and march slowly round the room, each receiving from the hands of Lady Iddesleigh a bunch of flowers. (Our visit, it should be explained, is

in the month of May, for this is one of the few specially energetic branches which keep open well into the summer.) Then once more they march round and receive each an orange. "Tell Lady Iddesleigh which you like best," says Miss Heather-Bigg, "the flowers or the oranges." The answer is significant, for they are all poor children at this school. It comes in an unhesitating and unanimous shout: "The flowers." Then, with cheers for their kind President, the children troop down the stairs and the "Happy Evening" is over.

It is usual for the boys and girls to be entertained on separate evenings, and on the boys' evening such stern delights as boxing and tug-of-war may be added to the programme. But some workers have taken the responsibility of letting the boys and girls play together, and I have not heard that any direful results have ensued.

The attitude of teachers towards the movement is almost invariably friendly, if only because it tends to improve the school attendance, tickets being given as a rule only to children who are regular and punctual at school. But apart from this consideration many of the teachers who have willingly given up their time to help organise the evenings and amuse the children have found their influence thereby increased and a bond of affection and respect formed which must make the daily work easier and pleasanter.

In summer time other humanising and brightening influences are at work in the Board Schools. The Children's Country Holiday Fund, which exists to supply poor London children with holiday homes in country cottages, finds thousands of its young clients every year in the Board Schools. While we may dismiss as apocryphal the stories of London children who have never seen a tree or a cow, it is true that in nearly every Board School there are many children whose holiday rambles do not extend beyond the London parks, and whose only acquaintance with the country is gained at the annual excursion of their Sunday School.

For such children a fortnight's holiday in a country village, under the care of kindly foster-parents, provides not only a great fund of health and happiness, but a fragrant memory for months to come. The help of the teachers is enlisted and gladly given in finding suitable cases for these assisted holidays (part of the cost is almost always paid by the parents) and making the preliminary arrangements; and so the delights of holiday times come to be associated in the minds of children and parents with the Board School. The Children's Country Holiday Fund was the means, during the summer of 1903, of providing holidays for nearly 40,000 London children, and practically every village within a hundred miles of London received a larger or smaller contingent. The method adopted is to arrange for the reception of children in the homes of respectable cottagers, who are paid 5s. a week for each child they receive. But in very many cases the little visitors are the objects of a vast amount of care and kindness for which no payment is or can be made.

It is, of course, only possible to speak in any detail of organised efforts which affect large numbers of Board Schools; but apart from these we find on every hand individual instances of devices tending to lubricate the wheels of the scholastic machine, to brighten the lives of scholars and enlist the interest and sympathy of parents. At one school a parents' social meeting is an important feature of the year's work; parents are invited to the school to hear the children sing and recite, to admire their work, to make the personal acquaintance of the teachers, and generally to feel that a genuine interest is being taken in the welfare and happiness of their children. At another school there is a social club for "old boys," or may be for "old girls." At another home gardening is encouraged by giving prizes for the best flowers or plants. At a certain Whitechapel school the children look forward with great eagerness to what they call their "annual ball." They take tea together, and



AT AN EVENING PARTY: CHILDREN OF OLD CASTLE STREET SCHOOL LISTENING TO THE GRAMOPHONE

then enjoy an evening's merry-making, which includes dancing. This is a mixed school, and the boys comport themselves with great gallantry. Nearly every Board School is an informal employment bureau; many schoolmasters receive more applications from employers wanting boys than they can satisfy, and many a boy has had occasion to thank his teacher for an introduction to a good place, or for advice and guidance in the choice of employment. In connection with a few schools there are apprenticeship funds to pay the premiums of boys seeking to enter a good trade.

All these things—not to speak of countless acts of kindness by individual teachers to individual scholars, of which no human record is ever made—mean the free giving up on the part of the teachers of well-earned leisure, and in some cases of money they can ill afford. And there can be no doubt that such services to the children are appreciated by the parents, and add immensely to the teacher's influence. In this respect the unselfish and high-minded schoolmaster or mistress has often an advantage over the clergyman. The charitable and philanthropic work of the clergy and ministers of the various religious bodies is often taken as a matter of course, even if it is not regarded with suspicion. "The parson," so the argument runs, "is paid to do this sort of thing. Besides, what he really wants is to fill his church. But the schoolmaster is paid to teach; what he does beyond that on behalf of the children must be disinterested kindness." And so teachers have found it possible to bring a real influence to bear on the homes of the children by virtue of the power which their unpaid services to the children have given them. The schoolmaster is often the business adviser of all the widows whose children attend his school, and it is to the teachers that parents often go in any difficulty or perplexity about their children.

It is in the contemplation of the varied influences that radiate from the Board School that one realises the exceeding hopefulness of the work in which the

teachers in the people's schools are engaged. To watch some of the poorest of Board School children amidst their dismal home surroundings, in dirty, narrow streets or gloomy "buildings," is to realise how difficult is the task of raising them to the level of self-respecting citizenship, and introducing into their lives some earnest purpose and wholesome ambition. But to see the same children at school, at the "Happy Evenings," on the football field, off for a holiday, in any of the activities in which their teachers take a friendly and sympathetic lead is to see something of the forces by which the task may be accomplished. The children—even the roughest of them—are wonderfully amenable to discipline, when it is wisely exercised, responsive to kindness, eager for human sympathy, fond of approbation, and willing to be led, if the leader is one they have learned to trust.

It would, of course, be extravagant to maintain that all School Board teachers take the highest view of their responsibilities and opportunities. But it may safely be said that the tradition of the service is favourable to the humanising of the schools and the enlarging of the teacher's sphere of influence. It is the growth of this spirit among teachers which has been the chief means of making the schools the great social force they have undoubtedly become. There are districts in London, once the despair of social reformers and religious workers, where the planting of a Board School seems almost to have regenerated the neighbourhood, diminishing lawlessness, improving the appearance and manners of the children, changing the attitude of parents towards education from one of hostility to one of friendliness, and bringing decency and order into some of the most degraded homes. A Board School now stands on the site of the old Clerkenwell Prison, and the gloomy underground cells, which still remain, are used for storing School Board material. It is a parable of what the work of the London School Board has been during these last thirty-three years.

## CHAPTER XX

### THE END—AND AFTERWARDS

Is it not a wonderful story—a worthy and memorable chapter in the history of London's government—which is now coming to an end? It is only when one looks back and tries to visualise the London of 1870, with its monstrous ignorance, its gross neglect of child life, its pitiful helplessness, that one begins to realise the greatness and glory of the work that has been going on before our eyes during the last thirty-three years. Sir George Kekewich, than whom no man is better qualified to speak on an educational question, has said that the London School Board has done more in a shorter time for a larger number of people than any other authority in the world. It is a large claim, but one which it would be difficult to refute.

And the reward for these unparalleled services is—extinction. It may be truly said that a measure of educational reform was badly needed. While the Board Schools were making such rapid strides towards excellence, the Voluntary Schools remained almost stationary, and a great constructive measure was demanded in order that the children in Voluntary Schools might not be deprived of their right to the best education the State could give. And the first step towards this most desirable end is to fling aside with contempt the splendid instrument of educational progress which has served us so well in the past! It does not seem a very wise or just or logical thing to do, nor would it have

been possible to a parliament or a government concerned primarily for educational efficiency. But it is one of the peculiarities of our English politics that we never settle educational questions on educational grounds. Nearly all our educational legislation has been the expression of a compromise between rival bodies of religionists or of an ecclesiastical victory which one party has gained over the other. To the latter category belong the Education Acts of 1902 and 1903, for though it would be wrong to deny to the authors of those measures a real interest in education, the primary aim of the Acts was ecclesiastical—to remedy, as one party maintains, an injustice to a particular Church, or, as its opponents declare, to secure an unfair advantage for that Church. The School Board system has always had its enemies. In the favourable political atmosphere of recent years they have been increasing in strength, and, taking occasion by the hand, they have triumphed at last.

And what of the future? It is not the purpose of these chapters to discuss matters which are still on the knees of the gods. But without being unduly speculative, there are one or two fairly obvious reflections with which the believer in education and progress may comfort his soul in these dark days of reaction. To begin with, the great work of the School Board must go on, though the authority changes. There may be an interval of marking time, even of administrative confusion, while the new authority is getting its back under the tremendous burden—a burden far heavier even than that of the School Board—which it has to carry. But it is contrary to all reason and precedent to suppose that the clock of educational progress will be permanently set back. There may be attempts on the part of some who dislike popular education to level down rather than to level up, but they will not succeed if progressive educationists are vigilant and active. And if the parsimonious section of the public which judges



every question of local government solely by its effect on the rates should raise the cry of "economy," it will find itself without the support of the clergy, hitherto the most powerful advocates of "economy" in School Board administration; for now that their own schools are on the rates, it will be to the interest of the clergy to promote the wise expenditure rather than the saving of public money.

Another encouraging reflection is that when the grosser injustices of the Acts of 1902 and 1903 have been sloughed off, there will remain a very efficient instrument of educational progress. That the Acts will be amended so as to give public control of all schools for which the public pays is as certain as anything in the future can be. The chief point of uncertainty and of danger lies, as ever, in the religious question. If the Nonconformists, when their hour comes, seek to impose and succeed in imposing universal undenominational teaching on School Board lines, we shall be in for a further spell of sectarian agitation and conflict, with consequent loss both to education and religion. For such a change would be but the substitution of one injustice for another—the injustice of compelling Roman and Anglo-Catholics to pay for the teaching of Protestantism (undenominationalism with its appeal to the Bible and its exclusion of the Church idea is essentially Protestant) for the injustice of compelling Nonconformists to pay for Catholic teaching; while the further injustice, about which no one seems much concerned, of compelling Jews and Agnostics to pay for the teaching of any form of the Christian religion would remain unchanged.

But if this danger be avoided, and a settlement arrived at which men of all creeds can accept, we may hope at last to see the miserable feud of church and chapel finally removed from the sphere of State education, which it ought never to have entered. With all the schools on an equal footing as regards public maintenance and public control and with the religious

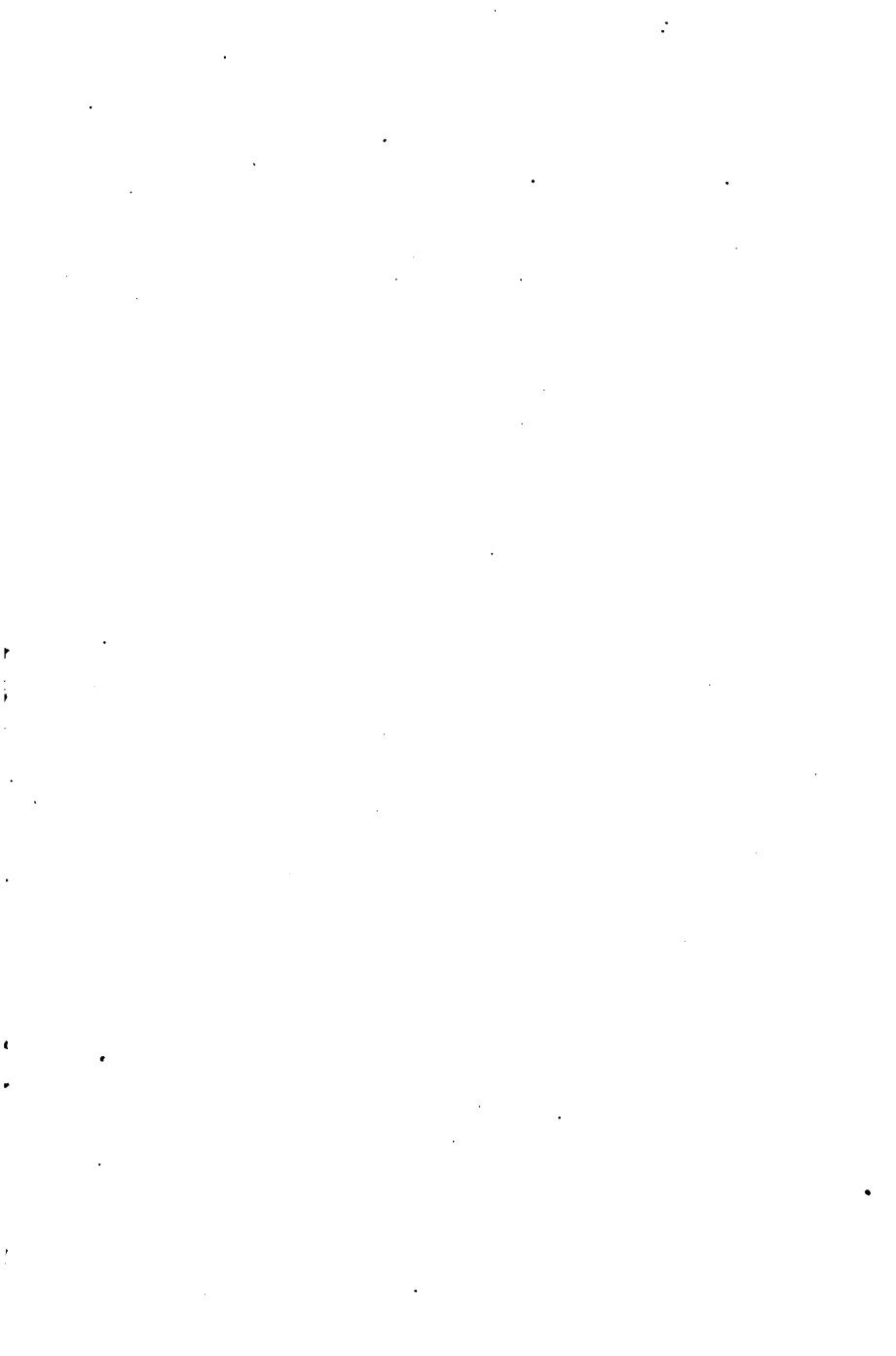
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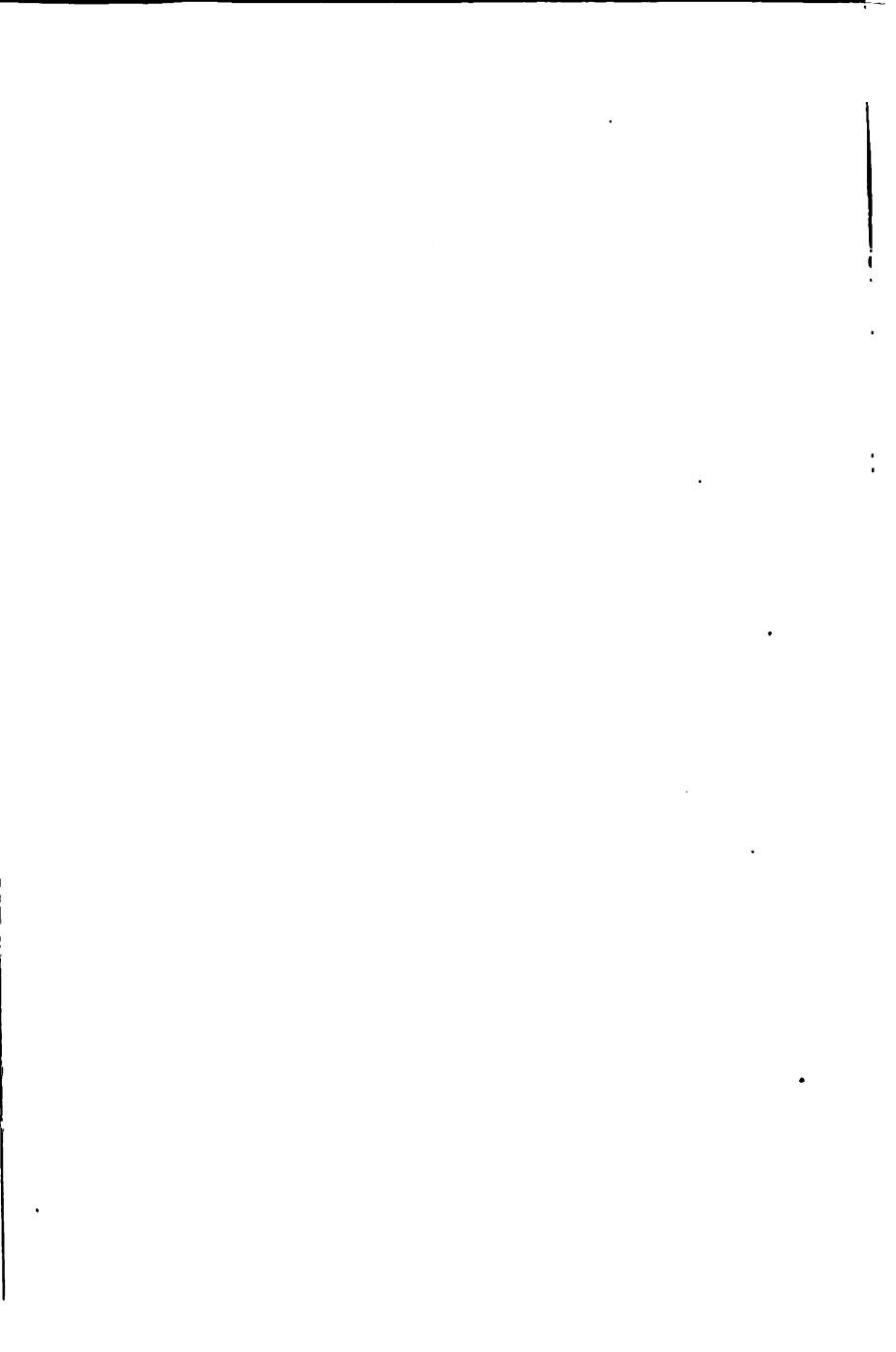
question out of the way all occasion for sectarian disputes will have been removed.

Some loss there may be from the less directly representative character of the new assembly and the consequent absence of the healthy, stimulating effect of close touch with the electors. But with an enlarged County Council, of which certain members might be regarded as educational members and elected for the specific purpose of serving on the Education Committee, we might have something not far removed from the *ad hoc* principle for which many Progressives have so strong an affection. It is well to look for the soul of goodness in things evil, and the badness of the new Education Acts in their present state should not blind us to the fact that they embody a right principle—the principle that education is the concern of the State, though this has not yet been pushed to the logical conclusion that State support must involve full State control. A great step has been taken towards the unification and co-ordination of London's education, an end which all progressive educationists have long desired, though it may have been reached by means which some of them would not approve. The absence of overlapping and consequent rivalry between different authorities will be a great gain. There will be, for instance, one system of Industrial Schools in London, instead of two as heretofore. The Council-supported evening schools can hardly be the rivals of the Council-supported Polytechnics. The relations between higher grade elementary schools and the endowed secondary schools will be readily adjusted when both are under the same authority. Scholarships will be awarded by the Council to children in the Council's schools. The same authority which presides over the little child's first steps in reading and writing will cherish and stimulate his growing intelligence, and finally, if he prove worthy, open for him the doors of the University.

The task which lies before the new authority is far greater in extent than that which the London School Board has had to perform, involving as it does the care of nearly 1,000,000 scholars, and the yearly expenditure of about £4,000,000 of public money ; but it will start with many advantages the School Board never had. And not the least of these advantages will be the example and the accumulated experience of a body whose work, if success be measured by actual good accomplished, must rank with the most successful essays in local government of which history has any record.

THE END







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